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Sir Benjamin Morris.

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CHANCES AND CHANGES

A DOMESTIC STORY

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "SIX WEEKS ON THE LOIRE."

"Of *chance* or *change*, O let not man complain."
BEATTIE.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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CHANCES AND CHANGES.

CHAPTER I.

RURAL PIC-NICS.

Halston returned just as all the party were mounted.

"For Heaven's sake what is that?" said he, as he reconnoitred, through his eye-glass, the horse and its pillion, which carried Henry Barton and his wife.

"It is an animated velocimanipede," said Hamilton, as he put his foot in his stirrup.

"You are a very fortunate man, Mr. Barton," said Halston, seeing Mrs. Barton put her arm round her husband, as she seated herself on the pillion, "I don't wonder at your being an advocate for that mode of conveyance, he! he! he!"

Henry smiled, and Mrs. Barton blushed, so prettily, that Halston stuck closer to her than ever; whilst the Rector jogged on quietly, on the other side of his son-in-law, and talked of the roads, and the crops, and the cattle, and mangelwurzel, and many other subjects equally removed from the comprehension of the beau, though listened to by the little matron with the utmost deference.

Catherine was an excellent horsewoman, for she had been accustomed to riding from her infancy; and, delighting to point out the various beauties of her native district, she now fearlessly led the way with Hamilton, round many a winding path, and up many a precipitous ascent,

which abundantly repaid the trouble of exploring them. Towards the right, Ingleborough and Pennygent reared their proud heads, over the beautiful extent of valley watered by the Ribble, sparkling with tarns, and richly studded with villages; Pendle Hill, in the distance on the left, marked the borders of Lancashire. Around these famous sister-hills many gentler eminences gradually rose and fell, in ever varying succession; clothed with verdure, and covered with herds of lowing cattle and flocks of bleating sheep, whose mingled sounds reverberated to the liberty, and expansiveness of the widely spreading scene. As they advanced, however, the country gradually lost its more beautiful features, and assumed only those of wildness and grandeur.—At length they came

> 'To Gordale chasm, terrific as the lair,
> Where the young lions couch.' "

On entering the little narrow valley which these wonderful masses of rock enclose, they

found the rest of the party, already arrived, and gazing on the foaming waters, as they fell headlong over the beetling cliffs.

The approach of the horses was unheard amid the roaring of the torrent, but Edward Longcroft, at that moment, turning an enquiring look towards the entrance, espied Catherine, and instantly sprung towards her, to assist her to alight. Her glowing and animated countenance, so rivetted his eyes, that he saw not the companion of her ride, till Hamilton, impatient of the admiring look with which he regarded her, expressed his hope that she did not find herself fatigued. At the sound of his voice, Edward turned hastily round, and looked at him with an expression, in which surprise and disappointment were so plainly pourtrayed, that Hamilton scarcely sought to repress the air of haughty triumph, with which he made an obeisance to him, much more profound than he would have exhibited at any other moment than

one of such imaginary victory over him to whom it was addressed. Edward Longcroft returned it with the slightest bend of his fine though slender figure, which he drew up, the moment after, to its utmost altitude—dropped Catherine's hand, and went away without uttering a word; leaving her lost in wonder, as to the reason that could induce him to shew such marked disapprobation of one whose early connection with her father, and consequent attentions to herself, ought, she thought, to give him some claim, even had he none in himself, on the partiality of her friends.—Hamilton was mortified to the quick, to see the expression of uneasiness which he imagined to be caused by the desertion of Edward Longcroft.

"The puppy thinks he may trifle with her as he pleases—and well he may, when she is such a simpleton as to let him see his power over her;" said he to himself,—"I suppose he plays her off to his sentimental cousin, now and then,

to quicken her a little; but he will not act the Sultan before me, I've a notion."

He then reconnoitered Louisa through his glass, and began to calculate whether it would most annoy Edward Longcroft, to commence a serious flirtation with her, or to shew him the progress he had already made in the good graces of Catherine. The longer, however, he looked through his glass, the more decidedly he fixed on the latter plan, for, besides its being that to which his inclination prompted him, he saw in the pensive sweetness and quiet dignity of Louisa's countenance and manner, something more than a probability, that he should not find in her the unfeeling vanity which too often prompts a woman to encourage the idle attentions of one man, whilst she is receiving the serious addresses of another.

The presence of Hamilton seemed to diffuse a restraint over the party, which threatened to render it, like most premeditated parties of

pleasure, any thing but what it was originally intended.

To remark however, upon gravity, is to confirm it; and therefore it was fortunate that Mr. Neville's placidity, and unsuspecting turn of mind always made him imagine every thing was exactly what it ought to be, or at least what it was designed to be, unless he was told in express terms to the contrary.

Under the influence of this impression, he ...nt about so kindly from one to another, con...tulating each upon the fineness of the day, and commenting on the beauty of the country through which they had passed, and the sublimity of the scene before them, in terms which bespoke such an admiring and grateful spirit, that none could resist its influence; and even Edward Longcroft and Hamilton seemed to feel, as they replied to each other's remarks with somewhat more of complacency than their looks had hitherto exhibited, that it would be

indeed, as Milton expresses it, 'an injury and a sullenness against nature,' to indulge in sentiments of petty dislike towards each other amid her grandest scenes; enough in themselves to still every earth-born passion, and lift the soul above all the evanescent cares of common life.

Perpendicular rocks, of the most savage majesty, scarcely deigning to admit a slender stem here and there, to force its way between the crevices, but sheltering in their bosom a spring, which, swelled by wintry rains, was leaping from crag to crag, a foaming cataract; and then running in haste through the little narrow dreary vale those rocks enclosed; a spot more fit for the hiding-place of outlawed men, than for the entertainment of youth and gaiety; pointed summits that led the eye towards the heavens, which seemed to assume a deeper azure as their cloudless vault was contemplated thus removed from every object that might inspire a wandering thought:—such is Gordale!

dreary! vast! sublime! drawing the mind at once to the contemplation of the primeval world, to which it seems to have belonged, and to that eternal duration of things, which renders the material creation a type, and emblem of the immortal soul.

Under the influence of feelings and reflections such as these, Mr. Dacres, of whom it might indeed be said—

> "The sounding cataract
> Haunted him like a passion: the tall rock,
> The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
> Their colours and their forms."

stood beneath the foaming spray, with up-raised eyes, and an expression of countenance, such as was haply inspired in the glowing features of Saint Bruno, when he first beheld, whilst yet a youth, the rocky deserts, in which he vowed to consecrate his remaining days to solitude and holy meditations. Whether Mr. Dacres was, at that moment, thinking more of

Earth or Heaven, he himself, however, might not have been able to decide if asked; but Mr. Halston soon settled the matter by his usual "He! he! he! a famous shower-bath that fall would make, it quite petrifies me to look at it. I suppose, Sir," turning to Mr. Neville, "most of these springs are of a petrifying nature—I know they are in Derbyshire."

"That is not precisely a reason why they should be so in Yorkshire, Sir," said Mr. Neville, with the utmost simplicity. "In Iceland most of the mountains are of a burning nature, I understand; but I do not suppose they impart their combustible properties, to the mountains of Norway or Denmark."

"But they are most amazingly curious, Sir, these petrifying springs—were they do petrify; I have put in the oddest things you can imagine, myself."

"Put in yourself!" interrupted Hamilton,

" to be sure, that is one of the oddest things I can imagine;—but why did you not stay long enough to be converted into a river-god?—You would just have done for this famous Ribble that fertilises all Craven, and that one can jump over so easily. I would have laid you at its source, myself, and put my canteen under your elbow, for you to lean upon; for the thing must have been in proper keeping,—a river-god of the nineteenth century, must not be encumbered with an antique urn, big enough to bury him in."

" No, no, I should not want burying; petrifaction and putrefaction are different affairs,—he! he! he!—but joking apart, I have seen some of your river-gods in Italy wonderfully well worth looking at; there was one at Tivoli, a fine fellow, and, by-the-bye, this cascade, here, reminds me very much of that at Tivoli. You have no idea, Ma'am, how delightful it is," turning to Mrs. Barton, who listened to

him with a degree of fixed attention, which gratified him no little; as from the unconscious smile that accompanied it, he made himself sure that it was the offspring of genuine admiration. "I assure you," he repeated, "you can have no idea of it."

"I am sure I have not had hitherto, Sir," she replied, "if it be a scene at all like this."

"No, it is exactly as unlike as possible," said Hamilton, "and I suppose Halston was thinking of Plato's maxim, that things are known by their opposites, when the resemblance suggested itself to him."

"No, in good truth, I am not very fond of that good gentleman's notions; I do not think I should ever be very fond of Platonic attachments—he! he! he!" and he darted, what he meant to be, a most admiring glance at Mrs. Barton, but unfortunately, in his zeal to appear the man of gallantry, he forgot the prudence

which one really of that description, would have observed; and the modest matron turned from him with undissembled disgust, and began to talk to Louisa concerning her garden; whilst Mr. Neville, with the utmost ease, slid into a discourse, with Mr. Dacres, on the sublime doctrines of the Platonists, and passing from them to those of the Stoics and Epicureans, went very leisurely through all the separate schools of Athens, before he once again bethought himself of any of the members of the *Conversazione* at Gordale.

Halston, meanwhile, on whom Mrs. Barton's indignant glance had not fallen unperceived, or rather, we would say, unvalued, took Hamilton aside,—

"I have got into a devil of a scrape with the dear little prude," said he, "did you see how angry she was just now?"

"No, indeed; nor did I know that you were in the habit of making any body angry."

"Why, to be sure, it was foolish enough in me, I was not sufficiently guarded, perhaps, in my admiration, and I saw she was devilishly annoyed lest her husband should remark it. She looked quite reproachfully at me, and, egad, I know I was wrong, I ought to be more careful!"

"Yes, you must not act the gallant gay Lothario, in this manner, when you get back to London, or you will be pinked through and through, like a cullender, before the season's half over," said Hamilton, with so ironical an air, that his astonishment of Halston's vanity might easily have been read in it, by any one less under the influence of that most agreeably intoxicating passion. At that instant Mr. Neville came up to them with an exulting air, to show them a specimen of the *lichen exanthematicus*, and began to expatiate upon his good fortune in finding it, as of all the numerous, or rather, innumerable family to which it

belongs, it is one of the most rare, and for which he most particularly wished just then.

Hamilton looked at the moss through his eye-glass.—

"I am no botanist," said he.

"Nor is it necessary to be a botanist," said Mr. Neville, "to admire such a production as this."

"Park was no botanist," said Edward Longcroft, "yet, when sinking under fatigue and disappointment in the wilds of Africa, an accidental glance at one of this humblest tribe of the vegetable world, led him into a train of thought, that not only beguiled him, for the moment, of his anxieties, but filled his soul with the sublimest hopes, and with a religious confidence, which he expressly mentions, as having given him fresh courage to go through the dangers and privations that awaited him."

"And well can I imagine it," exclaimed Catherine, "it is, indeed, in the minuter parts

of the Creation, that we see the Love of GOD; and His gracious tenderness towards us in nothing so much as in the flowers that enamel the earth, solely to delight our senses, and typify the beauty of His affection for us." Catherine, at times, had appeared somewhat of a visionary in the eyes of Hamilton, who had, himself, long lost the happy power of being carried away by the imagination, as he called it; but her enthusiasm was so genuine, so graceful, and above all, combined with so much simplicity, that it gave her an inexpressible charm, even in the eyes of those who were incapable of understanding the feelings that inspired it. Hamilton, however, always rallied her upon it, whenever she gave him an opportunity, and he now turned gladly from the moss, to exercise his *persifflage* on the speech it had elicited; but when he looked at the speaker, better feelings took possession of his soul; he could not but gaze with admira-

tion at her, as her dark blue eyes borrowed deeper azure from the cloudless vault to which they were turned, with an expression pure and sublime as the ether which gave an added glow to her cheek; and as she hung on her father's arm, with fond and duteous admiration of all he uttered, Hamilton, for a moment, felt as if, surrounded with such scenery and associates, he could at once renounce the pleasures, and secure himself from the vices of the world. "Yet, in a few days," thought he, "I shall leave these delightful scenes, and all that has charmed me amidst them; and then in what a petty stream of trifling, unprofitable incidents will my present impressions be washed away!"

Mrs. Barton, still linked in her husband's arms, had drawn near to listen to her father; at her side was Louisa Longcroft, whose eyes were soon attracted by a little knot of purple and white flowers, in the fissure of the rock,

close by the cascade, which was pronounced to be the *palemonium ceruleum.*

"Ah, how tantalising!" exclaimed Louisa, "it is exactly out of reach."

"I will try to get it for you," said Edward, "if you really wish it—I could find footing enough."

"No," said Louisa, "you shall not attempt it for me; I must be contented with this *gentiana amarella,* which is considerate enough to grow where it can be plucked."

"I think," whispered Halston to Mrs. Barton, "if I had been situated as I understand Mr. Edward Longcroft is, with that young lady, I would have procured her that plant at any rate."

For once Mrs. Barton yielded to the suggestions of a little innocent malice.

"I dare say," said she, "Louisa is very glad he did not attempt it: I wished for it very much for my own Hortus Siccus, but I did not

like to ask Mr. Barton to get it for me—it is so high up."

At that moment Halston felt the inconvenience of having taken up a decided character as a man of gallantry: he had just made a flourish as to what he would have done in Edward Longcroft's situation, and lo! he suddenly found himself placed in one quite similar enough to demand a proportionate degree of exertion. The glory of scaling the height, of plucking the desired blossom, and of delivering it, with appropriate grace, to Mrs. Barton, was no small temptation to him to undertake the enterprise; but, then, on the other hand, tight lacing and small boots rendered it one of no easy execution. Recollecting, however, that when a school-boy he had always been deputed, on account of his light weight, on any expedition wherein superior activity was required, and conscious that he had not gained much in bulk from that time, he sprang forward with desperate resolution,

and clambered up the cliff, for about forty or fifty yards, with such a ludicrous combinatiou of skips and strides, jumps and short runs, that no one from below could look at him without a smile. At length he reached the prize, and extended his hand to gain it; but, just at the moment that Hamilton was loudly bravoing him, the luckless hero's foot slipped, and he began to roll over and over with a velocity of descent, which left him time for no reflection but a confused one that he should be precipitated into the foaming waters; and under the impression of being bruised to a mummy, and finally drowned, he called out in the most piteous accents—

"Oh help! help! I am annihilated! I shall be drowned!"

Nothing, however, could be done for him, but to let him roll quietly to the bottom; and when Mrs. Barton saw him lying there, with no other damage than what was done to his

outward man, which presented, indeed, a most rueful picture of a dandy demolished, she hastily seized Catherine's arm, and made her run with her fairly out of sight, that she might indulge in the peals of laughter which his most grotesque appearance irresistibly called forth.

Happily for poor Halston, he had not the additional mortification of seeing that he had made himself as ridiculous in Mrs. Barton's eyes as in those of the rest of the party. On the contrary, perceiving that she had hastily rushed away, with her handkerchief to her face, he flattered himself that she was overcome with her terrors for him; and this thought, added to the animal good humour with which he was abundantly favored by nature, enabled him to join as heartily as all around him in merriment, at his own expence. His appearance was indeed enough to move the risible muscles even of a stoic: his coat, which had been tightly buttoned at the bottom of the waist, was rent

up to the collar, his stays having burst open in the outset of his exertions were seen at the fissure; his cravat hung by the strings round his breach, one whisker was left to ornament a bramble, and the other, still tenacious of the patent cement by which it had always hitherto been kept in its place, had stuck in the middle of his cheek, and enriched itself with the different lichens and earths over which it had passed, in his precipitous descent; and which had likewise entwined themselves in his hair, so as to give the idea of his intending to favor the company with "Mad Tom," in character.

Hamilton, however, undertook to set him to rights again; and with the aid, so near at hand, of the water, his "bane and antidote," a pocket glass, an extra great coat of Mr. Neville's, and a pink silk handkerchief of Louisa Longcroft's, in place of his starched cambric cravat; he sat down to the cold dinner which was provided for the occasion, a very respectable looking per-

sonage, and, barring the loss of his whiskers, of somewhat more manly character than when he had set out in the morning, fresh from the labours of the toilette.

This little occurrence, which, in some cases, would have gone a good way towards destroying the harmony of the party, in the present instance, only served to increase it, by giving to each an additional motive for exertion of colloquial talent, and kind attentions, in order to do away all disagreeable recollections.

Edward Longcroft had stationed two of his uncle's servants, who played extremely well on the French horns, at a distance, whence their strains came upon the ear with softened melody; and even the echoes that reverberated the sounds among the rocks, seemed to do it as if they would only whisper among each other, fearful of disturbing the exquisite stilness around. Soon, however, the notes were changed to livelier measures, and then gradually died away,

leaving the minds of the party better attuned to the gay and desultory conversation fitted for the occasion, than they would have been by a continuance of melodies which invited to abstraction and silent enjoyment.

Hamilton now seemed suddenly resolved to exert himself, and appear alike the fascinating companion and the polished gentleman. He saw in the mingled sensibility and intelligence of Edward Longcroft's countenance, and in the conscious dignity and graceful reserve of Mr. Dacres, attractions of a stamp that required him to rally all his own powers, to maintain that superiority which was generally conceded to him; and he soon diffused around him the willingness to please and to be pleased, which seemed to animate his own behaviour—we say seemed, for Hamilton was too well used to endeavours of this kind, to betray the desire of outshining others which in general actuates them: and accordingly Mrs. Barton and Louisa

Longcroft felt their prejudice against him gradually yield to the influence of his politeness and good humour; aided as they were by the attractions of a face and figure of such manly beauty as might defy criticism, and seemed to give him a right to the gay triumphant expression of countenance, and the ease of deportment, which, without assuming any offensive superiority over others less favored by Nature, seemed to say how aware he was that it would be ungrateful in him not to be satisfied with himself. Mr. Dacres, little mixed up with the fashionable world for the last five years, had no prejudice against him to contend with, and, ever ready to admire whatever was grand or beautiful, in either the physical or moral world, willingly acknowledged that his fine head and martial figure, would have graced a Roman, even in Rome's proudest days; and that if his conversation was somewhat of a lighter sort than his imposing appearance would at first have

taught his hearers to expect, it yet displayed sufficient ready wit and knowledge of society, to command attention, and inspire the conviction that he could make it more profound whenever he pleased. Hamilton saw in the brightened countenances of Mrs. Barton and Louisa, and the increased attention of Mr. Dacres, the progress he was making in the good-will precisely of those whose esteem he was, at that moment, most anxious to propitiate; and Catherine, amply gratified in seeing him admired, was contented to bestow her whole attention upon Edward Longcroft, that she might not divert any of Hamilton's from the rest of the party.—This was not, however, exactly what Hamilton wanted—not that he was so unskilled in the language of the heart as to mistake the meaning of that flattering silence, that trusting confidence, which is ready to suspend, for a while, the most gratifying attentions, in the full conviction that they will be resumed with

increased delight, when other claims upon them may be done away; but his vanity got the better of his delicacy; he wanted to show off Catherine's admiration of himself, at the very moment that he was endeavouring to excite that of her companions, and he began to grow somewhat weary of playing the agreeable to them, when he found that by it, he was only giving Edward Longcroft an opportunity of doing the same thing to her. Louisa's eyes, also, began to betray symptoms of wandering towards her cousin, and Mr. Dacres following the direction of them, fixed his upon Catherine, and a sigh burst from his heart, as if some feelings of a painful nature lurking there had been called forth by associations with her glowing countenance, and sportive smiles, as she playfully refused to restore Edward a penknife, with which he had threatened to add her name to the countless number, left by different visitants, on the sides of the rock. Fortunately

at that very moment Mr. Neville took out his watch, and the whole party discovered that the sun was hastening behind Ingleborough, and that if they meant to reach their respective homes, whilst any of his beams yet remained in the horizon, they must set off without further delay.

Poor Halston looked a little rueful at the thought of exhibiting himself on horseback, in the Rector's great coat; and doubly regretted not having followed his first wish of sporting his curricle on the occasion; but as that was now beyond recal, he was alike unwilling to set out in his masquerade habit whilst it was yet broad day light, or to risk any further accident by waiting for the obscurity of evening. The sight of Mrs. Barton, however, once more mounted on her pillion, fixed his wavering resolution, and he prepared to attend her, with becoming assiduity. The Longcrofts' and Mr. Dacres's being consideraby nearer Gordale than the rest

of the party were, had walked; and, as they meant to return the same way, they lost as little time as possible in their *adieux*, though Edward still found something to remark or enquire, as he lingered near Catherine, anxious to assist her to mount; but he was recalled to the attention he owed his cousin, by perceiving that she waited for him, and he then hastily bade the remainder of the party good night, and ran after her and Mr. Dacres. Hamilton soon drew Catherine from her sister's side, and under pretence of finding his horse somewhat tender on his fore feet, he persuaded her to leave the road, and canter across the grass, in such a direction, as to pass close by the pedestrians. Catherine waved her hand to them;—her hair blown back with the evening breeze, discovered a forehead so white and so serene, a cheek, so died in Nature's richest vermilion, that as her countenance lighted up with the sudden smile of affectionate recognition, and

unconscious elevation of spirits, and innocent enjoyment of every thing around her, she looked indeed what Hamilton had affectedly styled her in the beginning of their intimacy, 'the very goddess of the mountains;' and as he likewise took off his hat to the party, with a grace and spirit all his own, he felt the full triumph of carrying off a prize, which, however, he had scarcely thought of wishing to make his own, until his vanity had suggested to him that another, no way his inferior, envied him the power of doing so.

"And well he may," thought Hamilton, "there is not a man in London that would not envy me the affection of such a lovely girl"—and no sooner did this reflection pass through his mind, than it was followed by an ardent longing to shew her in the Metropolis, and exhibit her to the admiration of his associates.—Hamilton was no way mercenary; he had occasionally thought of marriage as a means of

repairing those inroads which dissipation and inconsiderate profusion had made in his fortune, but the calculation was at all times unnatural and repugnant to him.—Vain, rather than avaricious, he did not relish the idea of looking up to a wife, with any sense of obligation, though he felt that to be considered as having married an object highly desirable, on some account or other, would certainly be to him almost an indispensable condition of happiness.—So much for his estimate of the noiseless nature of real felicity.—He was nearer the truth in his next argument with himself. "After all," thought he, "any blockhead may get a woman with money, if he only look among the stupid and ill-favored, and people know too well how dearly such bargains are paid for, to envy them: but a girl like Catherine, is a prize that few can hope to find, and fewer still know where to seek for;—accident has thrown it in my way, and I should be

a fool indeed, and unworthy of any future good befalling me, if I could leave it to another." And then the figure of Edward Longcroft came before him, and he presently placed him at the head of the numerous train who were to envy him the possession of a beautiful and amiable girl, in whose cultivated mind and unsophisticated manners, were to be seen that union of intellectual strength, with simplicity of heart, which is of all combinations of character most difficult to preserve, amidst the artificial habits and false tastes of a Metropolis.

The moment that Hamilton entertained a thought of seriously linking Catherine Neville's fate with his own, he felt towards her that increased, and almost holy tenderness which any man of naturally good dispositions, however sullied or weakened they may have been, by his intercourse with the world, will be conscious of, when he looks upon the woman whom, from

pure motives of affection, he thinks of making his wife—and with this new feeling came another:—

"What if her affections should be engaged, or not inclined towards him?"

But this surmise did not tarry with him for a moment—the endearing, trusting fondness of Catherine's smile, put it to flight, almost before it had made itself known to him.

"And why do you smile?" said he, roused from the reverie into which he had fallen; and bringing his horse nearer to hers,—"Is it that you find me so entertaining?"

"No, indeed;" replied Catherine,—"I am better pleased with your silence, just now, than I should be with your conversation; for it convinces me that you have a deeper sense of the beauties of such a scene as this, than you were willing to give yourself credit for.—It is far more interesting by this fading light, than it was in the full blaze of day—is it not? and yet

how lovely it then appeared!—but look at those dark clouds that are hanging over Castlebar—and at the deep shadows they throw upon the valley;—and see that last rich streak of crimson, how solemn,—how storm-like it all is! I know you feel more than you wish to own."

"I do indeed, Catherine; at least, I feel more than I am able to own; but will you help me to analyze my feelings, if I unfold them to you?"

Catherine smiled again; but her complexion heightened, as if it had borrowed its tint from the western sky; and, quickening her pace, she joined her father, and kept close by his side, the remainder of the way.

CHAPTER II.

A DISCLOSURE.

It seemed, however, as if chance was determined to favor Hamilton's wishes by giving him an opportunity of declaring them.

The worthy Rector stopped on his way home to visit a sick parishioner; Mrs. Barton went up stairs, immediately on her arrival, to see her children; her husband staid in the stables to superintend the groom, and Halston hastened

to his own apartment, to make his toilette afresh.

"We have had a delightful day!" said Catherine, as she took off her hat, and shook back the curls which clustered on her forehead.

"Yes," said Hamilton, "it is one of many that it will be impossible for me ever to forget." He sighed deeply as he spoke, fixed his eyes for a moment upon her, and then withdrew them, whilst with an almost impatient expression he started from his chair, and walked up and down the room.

Catherine, embarrassed she knew not why, sedulously leaned her head over some scarce plants which she had gathered at Gordale, but Hamilton interrupted her examination of their structure, for he took them out of her hand.

"Give these to me," said he, gracefully raising them to his lips, "you will not grudge me a remembrance of this delightful day! though it is I, rather, who ought to leave one with

you; for I shall want nothing to bring it to my recollection."

"Surely," said Catherine, "it is more likely that you will forget us in the gaieties of London, than that we shall forget you in the seclusion of Nethercross."

Her voice trembled as she uttered these words; Hamilton seized her hand—

"Gaieties of London!" he exclaimed, "Oh, Catherine, you have yet to learn how wearisome, how palling such gaieties are! And even were they pleasurable in themselves, can they be enjoyed without a heart? I shall go back to them, I shall join the selfish, trifling circle which I have already seen too much of, I shall enter into a thousand empty, frivolous pursuits, but my wishes, my affections will all be centred here; for here I first learned to feel, and to be happy."

Catherine burst into tears; and it was amidst those tears, and blushes and smiles that Hope

herself might have been proud to wear, that Hamilton, scarcely less agitated than herself, drew from her such a confession of her feelings, as, the moment, it was made, she could scarcely forgive herself for having suffered to escape her lips. Nevertheless, though too impassioned and too sincere to disguise her tenderness, when honorably solicited by its object for the avowal of it, Catherine retained so much reasonable precaution and good sense, as kept her firm in her refusal to let Hamilton ask her father's sanction of his addresses, until she could herself decide, through the medium of more serious reflection and observation, whether his habits and modes of thinking were such as might authorize her to indulge in the delightful vision of future happiness with him, which her fancy was but too well inclined to draw. Hamilton reproached her vehemently for being able to trace out what he termed so cold a boundary to her feelings.

"Do you call it love," said he, "to wish for an opportunity of discovering my faults? Can it be pleasing to you to look out for causes to justify your severity?"

"No," said Catherine, "I look out to convince myself there are none: besides, love is blind, you say—surely, then, you are not afraid of so innocent a spy!"

"I am not faultless, Catherine. I know it too well, and you know it likewise—I never pretended to be so; perfection is a chimera no rational being would ever look for—but the woman that I love must not only take me with all my faults, but love me with them too—if not for them."

"No, that I protest against," exclaimed Catherine laughingly, "try to cure them, if you please, whatever they may be; and when you have done all you can, say you are sorry you can do no more; but never expect to be forgiven for what you do not endeavour to amend."

"Well, then, let me know which I shall begin with, first—" he was drawing his chair closer to hers, but he was interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Barton, who was soon followed by the rest of the party, and Catherine took her place at the supper-table, and did its honors with her accustomed attentive kindness to every one, whilst the encreased lustre of her eyes, and the heightened blush upon her cheek, whenever she encountered Hamilton's impassioned glances, were all placed to the account of the "beautiful evening" and the "delightful ride."

Hamilton's first care, now that he had made up his mind to devote himself to the blameless delight of a virtuous attachment, was to get quit of Halston; for with all the dread of ridicule clinging to him, which a thorough-paced man of the world can never entirely shake off, he shrunk from the idea of avowing his admiration of a lovely and amiable young woman, until he had actually invested her with the *eclat*

of being his bride; when he trusted her natural graces, improved as they rapidly would be by the polish of fashionable society, would present sufficient apology to his gay associates, for her deficiency of fortune and absence of elevated connections.

But how to get Halston away wat a consideration of some difficulty; for independent of a real liking he unfortunately entertained for Hamilton's society, and an insuperable aversion to his own, he actually did feel for Mrs. Barton's modest graces, and innocent archness, a sort of admiration enough to raise him in his own opinion, as being under the influence of a serious sentiment; which, thanks to our imitation of continental manners, he had seen exalt into notoriety many characters who had otherwise no more to distinguish them than himself. He accordingly found the day fully occupied in paying the little attentions of gallantry to the object of his adoration, and became so exqui-

sitely ridiculous under the domination of his passion, that Hamilton would have been downright angry with him, had he not resolved to make his very absurdity conducive to his removal, before it should reach the acme.

An opportunity was not long wanting.—Halston came to him, two days after the excursion to Gordale, with a very serious face:—

"Don't take any notice," said he, "if you see Mrs. Barton look grave."

"Why, what is the matter?" said Hamilton, somewhat alarmed, "I hope you have not been offending her, with any of your fine speeches; remember, my dear fellow, that the wife of a plain farmer, two hundred miles from London, has very different notions of such things, from a fine lady at the opera or Almack's."

"No, upon my honor," said Halston, with the most complacent air of credit with himself, for his prudence, "I have been as guarded as possible, lately, because I saw, clearly enough,

that whatever the dear little matron herself might think of my *petits soins*, they were not very agreeable to her husband. But this morning I took a fancy into my head, that I would just write a few lines, '*To her who can understand them.*' By-the-bye, here is the beginning; it is a little in the style of Moore."

"Very little, I should think," said Hamilton, glancing his eye over the blotted and interlined scrap of rose-coloured paper Halston drew from his pocket-book, "but, however, we will not mix poetry with prose, so go on."

"Well, I was just considering the lines, as I sate in the little arbour where you and Miss Neville were playing at chess the other day, and I was endeavouring to think of a rhyme for *sympathetic*, when I heard footsteps in the Lime-tree walk, behind, and presently found that Barton and his wife were walking there. It was very awkward for me; I durst not move, because I thought they would quiz me about my

verses, if they should see me with the pencil and paper, and yet I did not like to keep quiet, for I could hear every word they said, and I found they were talking about myself."

"About you!" exclaimed Hamilton, "in good truth I do not wonder at your modesty dreading that it should be put to the blush."

"Ah, well, you may laugh, but it was that which first drew my attention. The pretty little matron was, I found, making all the excuses she could for me, and saying every thing in my favor that she durst,—'I see,' she said, 'all that you point out as faulty in him plainly enough, and I can assure you that I am not at all dazzled by his fine figure and polished manners.'"

Hamilton bit his lip at Halston's folly in applying such a description to himself, at the same time that he could not be sorry that the person for whom he had no doubt it was really meant should be unsuspected by him.

"I could not," continued Halston, "very well catch the next sentence, for they were going from me as they spoke, but when they returned, Barton seemed quite warm in my abuse, and said—'its' your own innocence Amelia that keeps you in the dark respecting his real character; how can you think that a man admired as you see he has been, a leader in fashionable circles, accustomed to every species of dissipation:'—and really, Hamilton, there's too much truth in it all,—'how do you think?'—and here I don't know what either of them thought, for he whisked her round to take another turn, and when they came back, the poor little soul was in tears, and I could only hear her sigh out between her sobs, 'I wish he had never come to Nethercross: such men are only fit for London and London women.'—Egad, Hamilton, I felt like a criminal, for God knows I had no intention to make the little woman unhappy; but I was to blame

I own, and now what is to be done? her husband stalked by her side without another word; and as soon as I heard them shut the gate, I made my escape, and instead of invoking the Muses any longer, I ran about looking for you, that you might advise me how to act."

Hamilton felt pretty well convinced that Heny Barton's words, and Mrs. Barton's tears, had nothing to do with Halston, in any shape; for his conscience whispered him, that Catherine's happiness, and his own character, were the subjects of the anxiety they both evidently felt; he resolved, however, not to enlighten Halston on the subject, but to make the mistake into which his vanity led him, subservient to his final removal. He, therefore, with well counterfeited gravity, pointed out to Halston, the danger of attractions like his, being any longer contemplated so closely; and the uneasiness it would give him to find, that he had unwittingly introduced into a little family

circle, so domestic and so attached, any one who should, however unintentionally, cause a moment's pain, to any member of it.

Halston had a certain goodness of heart that would never have let him become in reality the character he affected of a man of gallantry, even if nature had been more disposed to favor him in it by her exterior gifts; he therefore instantly saw the matter as Hamilton represented it, and with a sentimental sigh, as deep as Werter himself ever breathed, he declared himself willing to depart rather than create any serious uneasiness between Mrs. Barton and her husband. It was therefore settled that he should set off that very day to York, and Hamilton promised to join him in the Metropolis, in the course of the ensuing week.

When Halston communicated his design, Henry Barton told him that he and his wife were going home about the same time, and would be happy if he would take Blackthorn

Farm in his way. Halston looked enquiringly at Hamilton, to strengthen him in his resolution, for the thought of leaving her father and sister had filled Mr. Barton's eyes with tears, and at the sight of them, Halston, who placed them all to his own account, felt strongly tempted to put off, though only for a few hours, the moment of saying farewell.—But reading disapprobation in his adviser's countenance, he summoned up all his resolution, and, with a second deep sigh, intended for the especial hearing of Mrs. Barton, he said that it was impossible; his engagements required him in town, and he had, indeed, already staid too long; but he should carry with him the liveliest recollection of the kindness with which he had been treated, and indeed, altogether, impressions that no time would efface. Mrs. Barton's smiles returned, for it was impossible to look upon Halston in grief, without an excitement of the risible muscles, so little was

either his countenance or his voice, fitted to express the feelings he wished to insinuate fortunately he placed her smiles to precisely the same account as her tears, and encouraged by them, he kissed her hand at parting, with an air of *empressement*, which, in the joy of his departure, she was scarcely conscious of; and when Henry Barton, with native courtesy, went with him beyond the gate, to bid him farewell, his last remark to Hamilton was, that Barton might well wish him a good journey, for he looked confoundedly glad to get him out of the way.

No sooner was Halston gone than Mr. and Mrs. Barton prepared to depart with their little prattlers; and the invitation to Blackthorn farm, was repeated to Hamilton, but with so constrained an air, that Catherine thought Henry Barton grew very stupid and formal, and seemed to make his wife as reserved as

himself. This, however, was only the thought of a moment; the affectionate hearts of the sisters beat in unison, as they embraced each other, and Henry Barton's countenance, as he tenderly kissed Catherine's cheek, only shewed that anxiety for her happiness, which Hamilton's conscience told him was sufficiently reasonable.

"But 'tis never too late to grow wiser and better!" said he to himself, "it is not what I have been, but what I shall be, that will astonish them, aye, and all the world besides;" and as he thus reasoned, all the world of St. James' crowded into his mind, and the thought of introducing his old tutor's daughter at court, as Mrs. Hamilton, perhaps as the Countess of Winterdale, filled his mind with a variety of feelings, which, could Catherine have analyzed, she, perhaps, would not have taken her seat at the tea-table, as she did, with a heart so

buoyant, that she almost chided herself for crowding all its wishes and capabilities of happiness, into the space of the little parlour which at that moment contained but Hamilton and herself.

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CHAPTER III.

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS.

Who is there that has not felt, and having felt it, who is there that can forget the exquisite happiness attendant upon a pure and first attachment; from its dawning of scarcely understood preference, to its soul-engrossing perfection of devotedness, throughout its gradual progress from hope to sympathy, from sympathy to confidence, entire and reciprocal! Such

happiness was Catherine Neville's, now that she seemed authorized to indulge all the sweetest illusions of that fascinating passion which, at one period or other, throws its brilliant, its dazzling radiance over the path of every mortal in his way through life!

Already she began to look on Hamilton as the arbiter of her future destiny, the companion, the friend of all her future years; and whenever she turned her eyes on him, it was with such glowing yet tender and admiring fondness, that even his heart, hacknied as it was in the ways of the world, and skilled in the counterfeit of feelings it had long since almost worn out, melted beneath the soul-subduing radiance of their beams; and however his vanity might be gratified by the entire devotedness of a female so lovely and so intellectual, he felt also somewhat humbled by the conviction, which he could not hide from himself, that she deserved a far loftier return, both from the mind and

heart, than any that his early follies and long continued habits of dissipation had left him to offer. Catherine, however, was fully contented —she, like all women of ardent feeling, and lively imagination, had formed an idol in her own heart, before which her utmost homage was paid. She decked it with every virtue, and clothed it in the outward form of Hamilton; and to him she accordingly looked up with all the fond and duteous respect, and all the exclusive admiration, which he would have well deserved, had he been, indeed, every thing that her partial and trusting fancy was willing to believe him.

In this state of delightful illusion on one side, and gratified vanity on the other, a week flew rapidly away, and Catherine found it more and more difficult to find arguments wherewith to defend herself against Hamilton's incessant entreaties, that she would permit him to ask her father's consent to their union.

At length, one fortunate morning, he obtained from her the promise that the next day the subject should be mentioned, when just as he was expressing his acknowledgments, they were interrupted by the good Rector himself, who came in to say, that he had received a note from the King's Arms, which politeness required him to answer immediately. He put the billet-doux into Catherine's hands as he spoke; and well might it be so called, for it was written on a small sheet of embossed primrose paper, highly scented, and its envelope was sealed with a fine antique of Cleopatra applying the aspic to her bosom. It contained a few lines in a beautiful hand, stating that "a lady, a stranger, being detained at the Inn, by indisposition, would esteem herself particularly obliged by half-an-hour's conversation with Mr. Neville, whenever he might find himself perfectly at leisure to favour her so far."

Catherine was enchanted with the elegance

of the note, and gladly acceded to her father's proposal, that she should go with him to call on the writer.—Not so Hamilton; he glanced his eye towards the paper, as Catherine held it in her hand, and a suffusion of the deepest hue spread itself over his forehead. He tried to hide it by bending over a volume of Tacitus, which he had been looking into during the morning, with Mr. Neville, and Catherine playfully telling him to mind his book, whilst they were away, set off with her father to offer their services to the invalid stranger.

When they arrived at the King's Arms, and enquired for the lady, they were ushered into the best room the house afforded, and found her resting on a little old-fashioned settee, from which she rose on their entrance, and came forward to meet them, with an air at once dignified and courteous;—she had thrown off a magnificent travelling pelisse, and her fine figure received additional grace from the folds

of a crimson India shawl, which hung in elegant drapery around her, whilst another of the same colour, twisted in the form of a turban, confined her dark locks, and made her appear like some Eastern Sultana, at least in the eyes of Catherine, who longed to transform the little settee into an Ottoman, and the worn-out piece of oil-cloth on the sanded floor, into a Persian carpet, that the adjuncts of the picture might be in keeping with the figure.

With much elegance of expression and sweetness of voice, did the lady, in a few words, acknowledge the kindness of Mr. Neville and his daughter, in thus favoring her with their attentions; and after apologizing for having intruded herself on their notice, "the fact is, Sir, she continued, "I have been obliged to travel for my health, and had meant to have gone across this part of the country to Harrowgate; but charmed with the beauties of Craven, and with the perfect retirement it affords, I have been

willing to persuade myself, that I might find springs in this neighbourhood, just as beneficial to my nerves, for a few weeks, as any that gayer places can afford. On enquiring of the good people of the house, respecting the surrounding country, they pressed me so earnestly to let them send to you, for that information, which it seems they did not feel themselves capable of giving, that, yielding to their persuasions, I have taken the liberty, for which I again must offer you my apologies."

The Rector, with his usual simplicity of reply, assured the lady there was no occasion to apologize for affording him the pleasure of being useful to her; and then entered into a topographical description of his darling county, and its local advantages, which seemed rather too minute for the patience of his hearer; as, notwithstanding her endeavour to appear attentive to it, she could not keep her eyes from straying towards Catherine, whose features she surveyed

with an earnest scrutiny, that brought the eloquent blood into Catherine's face, as she concluded within herself that the stranger must be a woman of fashion, by the ease with which she could look a person out of countenance.

Fortunately Mr. Neville, in a long and scientific harrangue on the waters of Ilkely, happened to want Leland's Itinerary, for a reference; and recollecting that, if the lady were at the Rectory, instead of the King's Arms, he could shew her the whole face of the country at once, in Whitaker's map, he told her so; and frankly asked her if she would favour him and his daughter, with taking tea at his own house; adding, that it was a mere step from the Inn.

The lady thanked him, and accepted the invitation; but step as it might be, she would not venture on it without her carriage, which she accordingly rang for, and in about five minutes an elegant travelling chariot set the whole party down at the Rectory.

But what was poor Catherine's dismay, when, on entering the parlour, the lady instantly recognized Colonel Hamilton, who, as instantly exclaimed,—

"Lady Charlotte Forsyth! Good Heaven!" —he sprung forward to meet her, and then recollecting Catherine, who turned pale as ashes at the name, he stepped back, and exhibited a painful mixture of embarrassment and emotion. The lady was more mistress of herself; a glance of scornful triumph shot like lightening from her eyes, but in a moment she was calm and gentle, and sinking on the sofa, in all the studied elegance of affected langour, she proceeded, in the softest tones, to account to Hamilton for her appearance in that sequestered part of the world, in the same manner as she had done before to Mr. Neville. But she had now a very different auditor to deal with: the tale that gained the unsuspecting belief of a man of Mr. Neville's guileless simplicity and

removal from fashionable life, did not, for one instant, impose upon Hamilton; who knew her ladyship's habits and connections, too well to imagine that she was really travelling alone, or at least, accompanied only by her servants, for her health; or that she would seek it in a retirement, which, however, beautiful in itself, would, he well knew, under such circumstances, appear to her synonymous with annihilation.—Lady Charlotte, however, neither imagined she should deceive Hamilton, nor in fact, wished to do so—it was sufficient for her, that her story lasted out the two or three hours that she was obliged to pass in the society of Mr. Neville and his daughter.

Mr. Neville, simple and unassuming as he was, had yet a native dignity of sentiment, and a consciousness of his own worth, which made him, though humble even to the lowest, yet perfectly at ease with the highest classes. In his youth he had, indeed, associated much with

them, and though he was well contented to give up their courtesies and refinements, for the more serious habits and energetic pursuits of his maturer years, he yet retained a remembrance of their polish and refinement, which, connecting itself involuntarily with his own spring-time of life, and blossoming hopes, made him think Lady Charlotte Forsyth, of whose name he had never heard till that moment, all the finer and more fascinating woman, for the discovery so sudden, and to him so utterly unlooked for, that she was a lady of quality.

Very different was it with Catherine; it was impossible for a young person brought up in so retired a manner, and naturally so modest in her appreciation of her own endowments, not to be sensible of some restraint, on finding herself, for the first time in her life, in the presence of a lady of high rank and established fashion; but in addition to this restraint she felt at once an awe and a distrust of Lady Charlotte; and

the circumstance with which her ladyship's name was indelibly fixed in her memory, rushed upon her mind with an anxiety and a foreboding of evil that blanched her cheek, and chained her tongue for the whole evening; notwithstanding the condescension of Lady Charlotte, who under pretence of encouraging her rustic timidity, insidiously contrived to pay her a degree of attention, which, feeling herself unable to return it as she ought, only added to her embarrassment.

To Mr. Neville, however, Lady Charlotte's notice seemed the amiable effusions of a naturally courteous mind; and he was sorry his daughter appeared to so little advantage before one apparently so capable of appreciating her; whilst she, in her turn, envied her father the ignorance of her ladyship's real character, which kept him in such good humour with her assumed one. Lady Charlotte was in truth a woman whom it was no easy matter to vie with,

even in her own aristocratic circle. Finely formed, graceful in carriage, her countenance animated and expressive, and her eyes dark and brilliant, her appearance awakened an expectation of intellectual superiority, which her fluency in modern languages, and familiarity with the costume and manners of different nations, gave her a very imposing air of; added to which, she danced, as was observed of Cato's wife, somewhat better than a modest woman ought to do, and played and sung with that complete command of instrument and voice which only the habit of performing in crowded assemblies can give. The principal use of music in fashionable society is to supply the place of conversation; and Lady Charlotte felt that there was at least equal need of it in the little quartette gathered round the fire-side at the Rectory, for Catherine could not, and Hamilton would not talk; her ladyship had ordered her carriage at ten o'clock, and an impa-

tient glance at her repeater shewed her that it was scarcely eight. The pianoforte offered something like a refuge from Mr. Neville's kindly meant enquiries as to her plans, for the remainder of the journey; and she entreated Miss Neville to favor her with some music, adding that she had heard none worth listening to since Grassini's divine "*voi che sopete, che cosa è amore.*"

This remark was not likely to make Catherine even endeavour to overcome her timidity; and indeed her native good sense, and quickness of perception made her feel that her simple style of singing, and old-fashioned music, however excellent in itself, could have no charms for "ears polite" as her ladyship's. She was mortified, nevertheless, to perceive that Hamilton seemed to be of her opinion, for he did not join in Lady Charlotte's solicitation, but neither did he join Catherine in soliciting her ladyship; he rather, by his fixed gravity, and abstracted

manner, seemed to stand neutral between the contending parties, and a stranger would have found it difficult to imagine that he had ever seen either of them before. Lady Charlotte, however, was determined to amuse herself by amazing [the good people, who, she imagined, had never heard any thing beyond a psalm at church, or a song after their nine o'clock suppers; she therefore sate down to the instrument, and after modulating a variety of fine harmonies, and running through half of Cramer's Preludes, she struck a few plaintive notes, and turning to Hamilton, asked him in a low voice, if he would take a second with her in the beautiful duet from Mercandante's "*Didone abandonata*," *Oh; non lascia mi, nò*

"Impossible," said Hamilton, in a voice lower still.

"Or this beautiful thing of Puci's," said she touching the keys, and warbling a few of the notes, '*Nò crudel, tu non m'amasti.*'"

"Do not ask me," said Hamilton.

Her ladyship went on:—"You used to sing it so well! have you forgotten every thing?—have you forgotten '*un segreto è il mio tormento?*'"

"No, no," said Hamilton, almost impatiently, "but give us something alone. I cannot sing to-night, I am out of practice."

"I should think it very likely," said her ladyship, somewhat sarcastically, and began to sigh forth Chérubini's '*Da un dolce dolore oppressa*,' then changing her theme to '*Cara adorata immagine*,' she ran through all the variations with equal taste and precision; and concluded with a bravura so clear and full, that Mr. Neville was lost in admiration, and Catherine in feelings of a more painful nature, which she could scarcely bear to analyze.—Was it envy of Lady Charlotte's superior attainments, that made her unable to listen to her

with pleasure:—notwithstanding the richness of her voice, and the correctness of her execution? no:—of that she acquitted herself, for she would not sing like her if she could, provided it were on condition of taking her manner along with her voice—"if expression," thought she, "consists in such impassioned accents, such entreating looks, I must never attempt '*el cantar che nell anima si sente*,' for certainly with me it would lose half its meaning.—Lady Charlotte went on, and gradually forgetting the rest of her little audience, addressed herself at last only to Hamilton; running from one air to another, asking him if he remembered this and that; sometimes stopping short in a plaintive melody with a sigh, then striking a few bars of more lively feeling, with a smile; and in short adopting all the fashionable and shameless coquettries which the great think themselves authorised to indulge in with impunity;

and from which, the pure mind of Catherine, turned with instinctive disgust, and foreboding of their evil consequences.

Unable to disguise her feelings, her delicacy wounded by the conscious betrayal of them, she averted her eyes alike from Lady Charlotte and from Hamilton, and fixing them upon a piece of embroidery, abandoned herself to painful wondering as to the unexpected yet apparently simple chain of events which had brought persons together in her presence, whose names she could not have heard joined without the most uneasy feelings. She was glad when the appearance of the Sandwich-tray announced that the evening was drawing towards its termination. Lady Charlotte took a biscuit and a glass of *eau sucrée*, and after trifling over it for half-an-hour, her carriage was announced. Hamilton rose to assist her with her pelisse; he could not in common politeness do less; but a sensation, such as she had never felt before, struck

across Catherine's heart, as she waited in doubt whether he would carry his attention so far as to go with her Ladyship to the Inn.

A moment decided it. Her Ladyship returned Mr. Neville a profusion of thanks for his politeness; took leave of him and his daughter with the air of one who, instead of receiving a favor, had conferred one; Hamilton handed her to her carriage;—it drove off.

Catherine listened breathless; Hamilton returned not: she caught a view of her own countenance as it was reflected in the glass over the chimney-piece, and shocked at the death-like paleness it exhibited, she made an effort to conquer the excess of her emotion, and employed herself in putting the music in order, and the chairs in their proper places; too jaded in spirits even to feel the truth of Madame de Sevigné's remark, that the pleasure of getting rid of disagreeable visitors is compensation sufficient for the wearisomeness of entertaining them. Fortunately

her father's eulogiums on her ladyship, as being like the Countess of Coventry, the famous beauty of the day, when he was a young man, were interrupted by a call from a neighbouring farmer, who apologized for coming "so shameful late," by stating that he found himself unexpectedly involved in an action of trespass, which might do him "a woundy deal of mischief," and as it was to be taken before the magistrates the next day, he had made bold to call, to ask Mr. Neville's advice, "for I says, Sir, says I, I never hears ony haulf so good, in pulpit or out of it."

Mr. Neville's character did indeed exhibit within his own little jurisdiction, the ancient combination of priest and lawgiver; and well would it be for mankind, were all laws formed in a spirit as benevolent, and administered with a hand as disinterested, as marked those to which the estimation he was held in, secured obedience. His features had just assumed the

look of patient attention, which always increased in proportion to the humble nature of the demands upon it, when Hamilton's impatient knock at the door, drove the blood back into Catherine's pallid cheeks, and made her chide herself for having censured an absence so short.

Mr. Neville, to prevent interruption, took his rustic visitor into his study, where he generally received his parishioners on matters of business; and in so doing, passed Hamilton at the door, without noticing the perturbation of his manner, or the disorder of his countenance.

Not so Catherine—At the first glance she cast upon him, she saw the agitation of his mind; he did not give her time to conjecture its cause, but throwing himself at her feet,—

"Catherine," said he, "I must leave you, this very night—what will you think of me—do not condemn me on mere appearance—the honor and happiness of a whole family are at

stake—that fellow Halston has ruined me by gossipping of my being here—I must tear myself away—I must show myself in town—it will only be for a short time, my Catherine, perhaps only for a single day; but such a sudden, unlooked for separation!—How could I trust to any thing but candour and kindness of heart like yours, to acquit me of blame, or to console me at such a moment!"

Poor Catherine too much wanted consolation herself to impart it to him, had he really required it as much as he appeared; she did, however, bring out something, though scarcely articulate, about his being the master of his own actions, and the best judge of his own conduct; and that it was not for her to dictate respecting them. He threw his arms about her, and pressed her to his breast, saying—

"But you have a right to dictate to me, my Catherine, for you are the only woman that can ever have any permanent influence over me."

At that moment Mr. Neville entered, and his head full of the argument between his parishioner Giles Bunch-clod, and his brother magistrate, Peter Puzzlepate, Esq., he very likely might never have remarked the agitation of Hamilton, had not he, with all the embarrassment of conscious guilt, first apologised for it, and then requested to explain it away, by speaking to Mr. Neville alone. Catherine, sick at heart, hastily took up her candlestick, and wished them both good night. Hamilton flew to open the door for her, and stepping beyond it, to the foot of the stairs, he impressed on her cheek a kiss, which his own emotion betrayed to be a parting one; but not a word was uttered, and Catherine, worn out and miserable, after long listening on her pillow to hear her father and Hamilton ascend the stairs, wept herself to sleep, ere they had broken up their conference.

CHAPTER IV.

POUR ET CONTRE.

It was only the sight of two cups and saucers on the tea-board, instead of three, that resolved to Catherine, the next morning, the question of Hamilton's departure, which she feared to ask.—But her father had already read it in her enquiring glance, and he replied to it as if it had been put to him in words.—

"Yes, my dear; the Colonel is gone, and

indeed he could not do otherwise as a man of honor;—aye, child, you may well look astonished, but I am sorry to say he has been very faulty; and it is a duty incumbent upon him to make all the reparation he can to Sir William Forsyth's feelings."

"Is Sir William Lady Charlotte's husband?" asked Catherine, more for the sake of saying something than for information.

"Yes, my dear, and unfortunately the Colonel was forced to accept a challenge from him, in consequence of some malicious representations made to Sir William, respecting Lady Charlotte's conduct: and, indeed, now that I think a little more about her, I can easily imagine that the desire of admiration, natural to so fine a woman, exactly the Countess of Coventry's figure, might lead her to seek, or, at any rate to receive, more attention from such a man as Hamilton than she ought." Here the Rector paused to drink his tea, and

spread sage-leaves on his bread and butter; he then went on,—" I am afraid Hamilton was greatly fascinated with her;" poor Catherine raised her cup to her lips, to hide her blanched cheek, which her father did not notice, for he was performing the same operation, though not from the same motive; he proceeded, " indeed he confessed as much;"—oh, what a pang shot through Catherine's heart, as her father calmly uttered these words—she could not suppress a convulsive sigh.—" Yes, my dear Catherine, you may well be shocked at such a confession respecting a married woman; happily we are removed from such instances of the depraved state of fashionable manners;—but do not let what I have told you, give you a fixed dislike to Colonel Hamilton.—I must do him the justice to believe that he had no dishonorable designs, however the matter might be represented to Sir William Forsyth; nevertheless they fought in consequence, and singular

enough, were both wounded; happily Sir William, who was most in danger, for the ball went through his left side, is now quite recovered; and Hamilton has made all the atonement in his power, by keeping out of Lady Charlotte's way ever since, until this unfortunate accidental meeting with her, of all places in the world, under my roof! the very place that he first sought to be almost as far from her as he could get. Most singular indeed it was! and certainly most singularly unfortunate! but he has done all he could even now, by setting off as he did immediately,—I dare say he is by this time fifty miles on his journey,—let me see—half-past-eight, and he started at five, I believe—no, he can't have got more than thirty miles, yet;—but, however, he will show himself in London to-morrow, and that will be enough to silence any ill-natured conjectures or reports."

Catherine could make no reply;—indeed

all the resolution she could exert only enabled her to disguise her feelings as long as her father remained in the room; and as soon as he left it, they burst forth in tears of mingled grief and mortification: that Hamilton was gone, appeared to her a sorrow easy to be borne, compared to the anguish which was excited in her heart, by knowing that he had confessed to having loved Lady Charlotte.—She would have tried to persuade herself that the poignancy of her sensations was owing to the impropriety of his attachment in itself.—"I could not expect," thought she, "that at his age, and moving in the circle he has done, he could have a heart to offer on which no impression had been made, but alas! an impression so sinful in the eyes of GOD, so abhorrent to all who think rightly, how can I feel otherwise than shocked, to hear that he ever entertained such an one! well may he be ashamed of it now!—oh! he has cherished better

thoughts of late; he told me that he had learned all his best feelings here, and must I not forgive him his past errors? who can he hope will judge him favorably if I do not?" And soon came kinder recollections, and more cheering hopes.—He was evidently grieved at leaving her; he had promised to return, and if he really loved, and, judging by her own feelings, how could she doubt it, he would never again find pleasure in pursuits that neither his heart nor his reason could sanction: and, in anticipating the delight of seeing him again, and forgiving him and listening to his thanks for her indulgence, she gradually lost the bitterness of feeling which his departure, under such peculiar circumstances, had at first awakened, and retained only that tenderness of remembrance, which makes even separation itself seem but a more refined intercourse.

Hamilton had kept possession of Catherine's room from the time that he had so

effectually trepanned Halston out of it, to the moment of his own departure—excuses for his remaining there were inexhaustible. Sometimes he pleaded that it had an eastern aspect, and he found out that the first beams of the sun upon his eyes had a wonderfully salutary effect, in enabling him to open them three or four hours sooner than they were accustomed to in London. Sometimes he urged that there was a writing desk so convenient for his papers, and a closet for all his paraphenalia, so that he must have that apartment, and no other. It was, in fact, the largest and pleasantest in the house, and this consideration, though it made in reality no part of Hamilton's grounds of preference, was yet a very powerful one with Catherine, in permitting him to continue in it. She now returned to it with a pleasure that almost seemed to compensate for the departure of its recent occupant.

The trunks that he had left behind him

seemed a pledge for his return. The books that he had been reading were scattered about, as he had left them: the table was covered with his dressing plate, and essences, and other fopperies of the toilette, which had struck her, the first time she saw them, as mighty ridiculous appendages to the travelling equipage of any of the Lords of the Creation, and more especially of a soldier; but which, from associating the idea of them with their owner, she had long learned to consider as mere harmless elegances, which a man of refined habits might reasonably indulge in, during "the weak piping time of peace," without any reflection upon his valour and hardihood in the season of warfare.

She knew that habitual luxury was by no means incompatible with constitutional bravery. Hamilton was an instance of the close combination in which they might be found. No man enjoyed indulgence more; no man absolutely required it less.

"He has shewn himself easily enough contented with us," thought she, "our simple fare, and early hours, and quiet fireside; who that had seen how obligingly he accommodated himself to them, could have supposed that he had been used to the banquets of the great, the excitements of a camp, the flatteries of fashionable circles! Yes, he might be any thing he pleased; equally an ornament to his country, and the pride and delight of a domestic circle."

Catherine was satisfied with this side of the picture. She opened the books he had been reading, and eagerly sought the pencil marks which pointed out the passages that had pleased him most. She looked round the room, and recalled every time that she had accidentally seen him in it, reading or writing, as she passed by; or at the window, when he had drawn up the curtain, whilst she was busy with her feathered tribe below: the fields, the trees, the pigeons that covered the tiles of the outhouses,

every object that he had been accustomed to amuse himself with looking at, seemed now an unconscious link between herself and him; and so full as every moment of her solitary day was of remembrances of him, how was it possible for her to imagine the numerous distractions of his busy life that might lead to, at least, a temporary forgetfulness of her.

But day after day passed on—no tidings of Hamilton arrived, and Catherine could not withstand the intrusion of distrust, and its concomitant anger. Sometimes she flattered herself he might wish to surprize her by an unexpected return; and then from anticipating too eagerly the possibility of one happy moment, she incurred hours of tediousness, wasted between the anxiety of expectation and the languor of disappointment. Then she feared he might be ill, or that he might again be drawn into some unpleasant dilemma, through Lady Charlotte's imprudence; but here Catherine was resolute

in setting a bound to her conjectures. She could not bear to follow a train of thought that might so deeply implicate his honour and her happiness, but she could not help feeling the injustice that he did her by the silence that thus left her leisure to indulge so many inquiries into its cause.

At length the long-expected letter came, to prove the truth of Young's assertion

"Our very wishes give us not our wish."

It contained the following lines, nearly illegible from the haste in which they had been written.

"My dearest Catherine,

"The anticipation of my return has been my only solace since I left you, but it is one in which I must no longer indulge. My regiment is ordered abroad immediately, and so short is the time allotted for my equipment that it is with difficulty I snatch a hasty moment

to give you this intelligence, and to request you to send my trunks by the first conveyance, directed to me at the Gloucester Coffee House, Piccadilly. Brussels is spoken of as the place of our destination: we shall not know it exactly till we are fairly embarked; but wherever it may be, you will hear from me as soon as I arrive, and meanwhile, with every grateful remembrance to your father, and every tender feeling towards yourself, believe me, my dear Catherine, in all climes, and under all circumstances,

"Equally and unalterably,

"Your attached,

"Arthur Hamilton."

All Catherine's anger against Hamilton for his long silence, all the feelings of doubt or distrust, which would occasionally intrude themselves into her mind as she reflected on the mixed nature of his character, vanished as she

read this letter, and only grief for his departure and anxiety for his safety remained. In a few days he would no longer inhabit the same kingdom; the ocean would divide them, dangers would encompass him;—alas! who would care for him as she had done, and must do!—He might be wounded!—and at that thought all that she had already seen him suffer rushed upon her mind, and she could no longer restrain her tears at the picture her imagination drew of him languishing on a sick bed, unattended, unconsoled; thinking, perhaps, of the days when, peevish and enervated as he was with illness, he yet began to be sensible of the pleasure of receiving kindness from those who were so affectionately interested in his recovery.

"And will he recollect those days, to me so happy!" thought Catherine; and she felt that if she could be assured of that, her sorrow would lose half its bitterness.—"Oh! that they would be ever present to his eyes, as they are to

mine!—when he first began to taste the pleasure of returning health, and would pace our little parlour, like a lion in a cage, as I used to tell him. Yes! he was kind then, and seemed to wish for no wider range. Oh, how swiftly, how happily flew the days as he got better, no variety was necessary—every trifle that occurred was interesting; his cheerfulness, his good humour gave a charm to all that came within his influence! Oh, if I could but know that he would recollect and value the past, that he would still be with me in spirit, I could bear even this lengthened absence, this sad distance that parts us; and, sadder still, the perils that attend upon his occupation."

Poor Catherine! floods of tears interrupted her soliloquies; she kissed even the senseless trunks, as she prepared them for the coach, and longed to detain some of his books, that she might still have something that belonged to him, something he had looked upon and touched!

but a refinement of delicacy forbade her to do so: yet she could not help feeling something like being rewarded for it, when, on looking into her work-box, after the trunks were sent away, she found that she had forgotten to enclose a scent-bottle, which he had one day put into her hands, on her complaining of having a slight head-ache.

"This I *must keep*, for the present," she said to herself, and involuntarily she raised it to her lips, for she well remembered, that the proffer of it was one of the first attentions he had ever paid her; long after she was interested, far more than she was at the time aware of, in any manifestation of kindness from him.

Mr. Neville was not at home when Hamilton's letter arrived, and Catherine had time to recover her composure, in part, before he returned. He received the intelligence she communicated to him, as if it had concerned a son,

and condoled with her as if she had been called upon to part with a brother.

"You must write to him, my dear Catherine," said the worthy man, "and assure him of our good wishes, and our prayers for his safety; and he must write to us, sometimes, to inform us of it: tell him so."

Catherine willingly obeyed the injunction. She sate down immediately to her desk; the sending the luggage according to his direction, afforded her quite subject enough to begin a letter to him, and in the melancholy pleasure of giving way to her feelings, their acuteness was for a time suspended. The hope of his appreciating the tender expressions which had flowed from her pen, with a rapidity that gave her no time to criticise them, until they were beyond recal, soothed her dejected spirits, and it was not until she saw, in the newspaper, that the regiment had embarked, that she

felt the full forlornness of her deserted state.

Let not those who fancy they have wise heads, because they have cold hearts, ridicule, under the contemptuous epithet of a love-sick girl, the image of a young woman of sensibility and refinement, nursing in solitude the remembrance of one whom she had associated with all her purest ideas of happiness. It is only in the bosoms of the amiable and the virtuous, that the flame of love will burn bright and unalloyed; and should it ever appear in such to be lighted by an unworthy object, it is because that object is seen by them through the medium of their own excellence, and invested accordingly with those virtues, without the imaginary presence of which, love, in them could not exist; for sympathy, which is its vital essence, would be wanting.

Hamilton was by no means a character that Catherine would have admired, had she seen

him under any other circumstances than such as, by throwing him upon her attentions for his comforts, were more calculated to awaken her feelings than her judgment. But, though he had many faults, he had yet some virtues, and still more fascinations. Rank, fortune, idleness, and freedom from control, had all combined to expose him to heartless society, and frivolous pursuits. But he was not naturally depraved; and, however, he might occasionally be led into vice, he always admired virtue—however his indolence might make him generally content himself, with mere amusement, he yet never felt really interested, except when his intellectual powers were called forth and appreciated.

The circumstances attendant on his introduction at the Rectory, were singular enough to excite interest even in the dullest imagination; and ardent and lively as Catherine was in all her feelings, no wonder that the almost romantic commencement of an acquaintance which made

such an epoch in the uniform simplicity of her village life, should add to its value in her eyes, as something gained, that she never could have calculated upon.

That air of the world and knowledge of manners, which is unavoidably acquired by familiar intercourse with the higher circles, has always an imposing charm for an active mind, bred up in retirement, and only guessing, from description, at the *Chances and Changes* of "many coloured life." With regard to Hamilton too, it had another advantage—it afforded excuses for all his faults: whatever good Catherine discovered in him, she placed to the credit of his natural disposition; whatever she could not hide from herself of imperfection, was charged to the account of the society with which he had been obliged to mix. The personal vanity, too, that betrayed itself occasionally in the perfect satisfaction with which he displayed his fine and martial figure, was passed over with

the same consideration: he had the happy art of causing it to be understood how handsome he was generally considered, without appearing himself to annex any importance to so adventitious a distinction; and his coxcombry was so entirely free from the pettiness of personal affectation, that it only seemed a good humoured demand of that admiration which it was impossible to refuse. His very inequalities were advantages to a character such as his, which, like the charms of an irregular beauty, rather pleased by what it promised, than what it displayed; for if he sometimes disappointed by petulance or caprice, the idea of excellence he had just before inspired, he as often redeemed it by some unexpected trait of goodness, or some sudden corruscation of wit, with which he in a moment irradiated the gloom his preceding injustice or ill-humour might have diffused. Dangerous is such a character to an unsuspecting mind, and affectionate heart, which cannot bear

to revoke a favourable opinion, when once formed, and had rather acknowledge faults in itself, than see them in those it loves! Could Catherine behold personal graces, combining the elegance of a courtier, with the spirit of a soldier, and not feel the difference between them and the awkward bashfulness, or pert conceit, between which she had been accustomed to alternate in the William Brayswicks, and Mr. Pughs of the village! Could she feel her intellectual resources, which had hitherto been her greatest, though her solitary enjoyment, called forth, and enriched, without being grateful to him, who, with the most delicate flattery, appeared alternately her tutor and her pupil; could she even see her own personal attractions, one instant gazed on with admiration, the next with affected apathy, and not yield to the feminine pride, that urged her to revenge the momentary slight, by making the impression permanent. And could she see her-

self, at last, the victor, without delighting in the captive, who, seemed to wear her chains so gracefully ! Those who live in the busy world, where every thing is at war with sentiment and feeling, and where one evanescent impression is almost immediately effaced by another, as light and fleeting, cannot conceive the devotedness with which a cherished idea is nursed in solitude, by a tender and uncorrupted heart.

CHAPTER V.

A NEW INMATE.

Catherine now found her fate and her happiness linked with the affections of the busy world, and for the first time in her life she began to think the situation of Nethercross too much secluded, too entirely cut off from the more frequented channels of communication with society at large. The sight of the York Courant, once a week, was no longer sufficient

for her curiosity; she longed for a daily London paper, in order that she might be made acquainted with the various movements of the different military bodies, and she would have sent to Longcroft Hall to beg the loan of one, but a feeling which she was unwilling to place to the account of shame, but which nevertheless she could not define in any other manner, forbade her betraying the anxiety she felt in the arrangements of government, which interested the generality of her associates as little as they would have done the inhabitants of Timboctu. She had therefore no alternative, but patiently to wait for the arrival of the York paper, and when at length it made its appearance, the first paragraph on which she cast her eye, informed her that Hamilton's regiment had embarked for the continent the preceding week. It was then decided—for a time, at least, she must be contented to know that he was no longer in the same country with herself,—that

for some weeks she must not expect even to hear from him; and in the dreary calm which this conviction brought to her harassed feelings, it seemed as if she might hope, in being relieved from the fluctuations of suspense, to recover her tranquillity.

Now it rarely happens that any one event in this variable world, should be viewed exactly in the same light by any two persons; nay, it is frequently the case that what is pregnant to one party with 'bitter bale,' shall bring to another complaisancy and rejoicing.—So it was that the same paragraph which filled Catherine's eyes with tears, lighted Edward Longcroft's with gladness,—"Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed as he threw the newspaper down, and took some hasty turns across the room; "Hamilton is fairly off at last!"

Louisa looked at him with surprise. "I did not know," said she, "that you were so particularly interested in his removal."

Edward coloured. "Yes," said he, "I have a particular interest in knowing that he is not likely to come back for some months at least; because Hervey is impatient to make up for lost time in his studies; there will be room for him now at the Rectory, and I can settle every thing about him with Mr. Neville."

"He will be a much more desirable inmate, I must say," replied Louisa, "and I assure you I am as glad that Colonel Hamilton is no longer in the kingdom as you can be."

Lord Hervey was a distant relation of Edward Longcroft's on the mother's side: he had lost his parents when he was just old enough to appreciate their tenderness and understand their worth, and the same pulmonary complaint which had deprived him of his mother, had rendered his own childhood so delicate as to interfere greatly with his early studies, and prevent him from finishing his education at Cambridge, as his guardians had wished.

The last two years, however, he had gained so much strength as to be in comparative health, and having some acquaintance with Mr. Neville, and greatly respecting his character, he wished to put himself under his care, for a few months, in order to go through a course of mathematics and classical reading, previous to his entering at college.

The negociation was soon concluded, through the medium of Edward Longcroft.—Nothing could be more liberal than Lord Hervey's offers, nothing more amiable than his deportment. In a few days he was put into quiet possession of the room originally occupied by Hamilton, and in place of a fashionable valet like Monsieur Beaujeu, he was attended by a respectable man who had lived with his father in the same capacity, whose own locks began to show the silvery touch of age, and who looked upon this last scion of a virtuous and honorable house with affectionate anxiety, fearing that it

might possibly be his fate to mourn over him also, as he had done over his noble father, who had died in the prime of life, of wounds received at the head of his regiment in one of the first engagements of British troops against French Revolutionists.

The tender remembrance he retained of the virtues of his parents, the void which was left in his youthful bosom by the loss of their endearments, joined to the frequent indispositions which, by preventing him from mixing with society, threw him upon his own resources for reflection, had touched Lord Hervey's character, naturally contemplative, with a saintly mildness, which, young as he was, it was impossible to look upon, and not to venerate. With him Catherine did indeed feel as with a brother, and whilst the attentions which his health required, diverted her thoughts from incessantly dwelling upon Hamilton, she was at the same time in no danger of admitting any other

interest strong enough to efface his image, or endanger her own peace a second time.

Edward Longcroft now called frequently at the Rectory to see his friend, and recovered much of the easy and affectionate familiarity of former days.—Louisa often accompanied him; sometimes Mr. Dacres also joined the party, and when he and the worthy Rector conversed with each other on religious topics, Lord Hervey would listen to them with a rapt attention, that bespoke him a spirit early ripening for Heaven.

Still there was some hidden feeling in the breasts of all parties, that prevented conversations with Louisa and Edward Longcroft having that full charm of implicit confidence for Catherine, which they had had in the happy period of childish friendship. It seemed to be understood that Hamilton's name was never to be mentioned, and whenever there is one sub-

ject that is to be carefully avoided, it is sure to extend its paralysing effect to a certain degree, over every other. Edward, too, was unequal in his behaviour, compared with what he had been in earlier days; sometimes he was all vivacity, sometimes almost dejected; sometimes he paid Catherine the kindest attentions; at other times his deportment was so distant that it might indeed have been attributed to pride, had not his invariable courtesy, to even the humblest villager, shown how entirely he was free from that sin by which, according to tradition, we are told—

"E'en Angels fell."

One fine afternoon, just at that season in early spring, when old-fashioned people find time to take a walk between dinner and tea, Catherine and Lord Hervey strolled as far as the celebrated well near Giggleswick, which puzzles the naturalists to account for the ine-

quality of its movements—now bubbling its waters up to the very edge of its basin, then suddenly withdrawing them and leaving it dry, until the next freak of ebullition comes on, at intervals so uncertain as to send many an impatient tourist away, weary of waiting for a phenomenon which appears to have so little consideration for its visitants.

Many an hour, however had Catherine loved to linger there; and many a time had it served her as a meeting spot with Louisa, where together they perused some favorite work, or loitered away their moments of happy leisure, and chid at last 'the hasty-footed time' for parting them. It seemed as if the sympathy of their childhood still drew them to each other, for as Catherine came within sight of the well, she saw also Louisa, attended by Edward and Mr. Dacres, and looking as animated as she was wont to do while yet—

"A young and happy child."

ere she was conscious of the care and importance she would be expected to take upon herself, as Mr. Longcroft's only child, and sole heiress. The cheerfulness of all the party was enhanced by this unexpected meeting.

"We were fortunate to set off just when we did," said Catherine, "ten minutes later or sooner would have most likely deprived us of the pleasure of seeing you."

"It reminds me," said Mr. Dacre, "of the fact we were reading this morning relative to the butterfly. It was observed by a naturalist," continued he, addressing himself to Catherine, "to keep its stand on a flower for a considerable time, when it suddenly flew off, and the naturalist had the curiosity to follow it for more than a mile, when it checked its flight, and settled on another flower, where one of its own species was apparently waiting for it, as if by appointment."

The habits of the insect tribe, the laws of

sympathy, the comparison of instinct with the reasoning faculty, the beauty of creation and the goodness of the Deity were all brought into discussion by Mr. Dacre's anecdote; and Lord Hervey repeated with a fervor, which gave an additional weight to the sentiment, Wordsworth's fine lines—

> "Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
> Thanks to its tenderness, its joys and fears,
> To me, the meanest flower that blows, can give
> Thoughts, that do often lie too deep for tears."

Catherine's eyes swam, as she looked on the energetic yet fragile speaker. The sun threw its departing beams of crimson over his cheek, before painted too deeply with the hectic that seemed to herald his speedy flight to realms which were to him more real property than any that he held on the short lease of mortality, and his countenance glowed with the mingled fires of poetry and devotion, until its expression was little short of angelical.

"Wordsworth," said Catherine, wishing to account for her emotion, "is the most affecting as well as the most holy of poets; I always wish to be on my knees when I read his works."

"His poetry is devotion in itself," said Edward Longcroft, "and how truly does he link the fair forms of nature, with the subtlest workings of the mind of man. Yes, there is nothing in the natural world that has not its parallel in the human heart. This well, Catherine, which we have so often watched together, its ebbings and its flowings, its seemingly causeless variations, one moment full to overflowing, the next dried up, I feel it here," pressing his hand upon his breast, "despondency often succeeding to rapture, transports sometimes lifting from despair."

His voice had gradually become almost inaudible, in the emotion with which he spoke, but it reached Louisa's ear.

"I did not know," said she, "that you were subject to such violent and contradictory feelings; how long is it since your last attack?"

She tried to smile as she spoke, but her trembling lip betrayed that some real feeling of deep interest at that moment pressed her mind.

Edward's heart did indeed just then illustrate his remark, by its unequal pulsations at the sight, painful as unusual, of his cousin's disturbed countenance; and Catherine, though unconscious of any thing that could give rise to an uneasy feeling in any of the party, yet crimsoned "like a guilty thing," as Mr. Dacres fixed his enquiring looks upon her, with a gravity which she fancied into something almost amounting to reproach.

Louisa's sweetness, however, dispelled immediately the gloom which a manner so foreign to her nature, had, for a moment, cast over countenances just before radiant with the reflection of each other's happiness.

"Come," said she, affectionately taking Catherine's hand, "we must leave causes and effects, and sympathies and repulsions for the present, or we shall all get into disgrace; you for keeping Lord Hervey out in this keen mountain breeze, and Edward and I for making dinner wait; though, to say the truth, I had rather make it wait altogether, and go and drink tea with you at the Rectory."

"Do then," said Catherine, "my father will be so delighted to see you, and we can send a messenger to the Hall; and the tea-table shall be set out in the way that it is at Mrs. Brayswick's sheep-shearing, so that Edward shall not find any deficiency to make him regret having foregone a more solid meal."

"O, we know," said Louisa, laughing, "the attractions of your rural cates, but we must not play truant, like a naughty boy and girl; we must mind what papa says, must we not Edward?" turning towards him with a smile, the

archness of which beautifully irradiated her naturally pensive features.

He took her hand, and affectionately drew it through his arm, and the party separated with as much harmony as they had felt at meeting, though, perhaps, not one of them returned home in the same frame of mind in which they set out.

The next day Catherine received a note of enquiry after her health, from Louisa. It was written in a style of vivacity beyond what she generally displayed. "Edward," said she, towards the conclusion of her letter, "set off this morning for town. An unpremeditated movement; I suppose the offspring of some of those wayward impulses he was explaining so metaphysically, or so mystically, last night."

Catherine was a little surprised at the suddenness of Edward Longcroft's departure; yet she felt a relief, she knew not why, on finding that Louisa appeared no way grieved, or of-

fended by it: on herself it had no other effect than that of making her rouse to the utmost her companionable powers, in order that Lord Hervey might not be sensible of any void in the absence of his friend.

Calmly and uniformly were the days now passed at the Rectory. Mr. Neville found the instruction of a pupil, so sedulous to learn as Lord Hervey, a pleasing recreation after his parochial duties; and Catherine, always desirous of improvement, gradually relinquished her poetical studies to share in the more serious ones of Lord Hervey; reading with him the works of divinity and moral philosophy, which her father recommended; delighting to hear from him the opinions of the earliest philosophers of Greece and Rome, on the nature of the Deity and the destiny of man, and to trace with him, in their dim glimpses of heavenly light, the dawnings of that bright day-stream of refulgence which was to shine forth in future

ages, under the glorious sun-rise of Revelation.

If any thing could have given Lord Hervey's studies a greater interest to him, than that which their own important end presented, he would have found it in their being shared by one who combined so much feminine attraction, with a solidity of pursuit, and depth of reflection, which he had never before seen united in her sex. To him Catherine did indeed appear in her full worth. The thoughtfulness which, unconsciously to herself, her manners had assumed since the departure of Hamilton, accorded better with his spirits, subdued as they were by sickness, than her natural gaiety would have done; and whilst his delicate health drew forth her kindest attentions, the elevation of his thoughts and his entire exemption from the vanities of his rank, made her pay that tribute of respect to his virtues which his character, to one less observing, less disposed to venerate goodness for

its own sake, might not have had strength, or rather pretension enough to command. He would sometimes tell her, he wished she had been his sister.

"You would have graced my solitary Hall," he said one day to her; "and when you became tired of its dulness, for I know I have not the art of making any place very cheerful, then we would have gone abroad, and visited Rome and Athens, together; and trod in the steps of Plato himself; and traced the academic shades where he promulgated his sublime doctrines, and shadowed out his notions of the Divine principle of all things. Would it not be delightful, dear Catherine?"—and as he spoke he took her hand, and his eyes sparkled with a brilliancy beyond even that which might be too painfully accounted for, by the hectic flush on his cheek.

Catherine smiled; "You are very eloquent," said she, "this morning," slightly colouring as she withdrew her hand, "it is the clear blue sky

and the perfume of this breeze, as it comes over the lilachs, that sets your fancy roving so."

"Ah it may well rove; it must," said Lord Hervey, sighing, "for the breezes that waft health and cheerfulness to you, seem armed with points and tiny daggers to me, and make me afraid that this clear northern air is somewhat too searching for my unfortunate lungs—I have never felt the evils of my hereditary constitution a real unhappiness till now."

Catherine could scarcely forbear weeping at this first intimation Lord Hervey had ever given of the sense he entertained of his own situation.

"You have scarcely yet," said she, "recovered from the boisterous March winds; but we shall soon have summer come in all its pride and beauty; and it will come with balm and healing on its wings—I am sure you will be all the better, the longer you stay at Nethercross."

"And I am sure I should stay a very long time,

before I could ever wish to leave it," said he, "for here, Catherine, my heart at any rate expands, whatever my lungs may do. Here I seem once more to have a father; and to have an additional source of delight in your friendship which I dreamed not of—Never indeed, since the death of my parents, have I seemed to live till now—I have mourned, I have suffered, I have meditated; I have sometimes drawn pictures of ideal happiness, but I have never really enjoyed existence till now." There was in Lord Hervey something so unworldly, so almost saintly, that speeches which from other lips would have seemed the language of passion, or at any rate, of the gallantry which would assume the appearance of it, from his, could be listened to without embarrassment; and Catherine assured him of her pleasure in his society, and of the improvement she had already derived from it, with as much affection, and as much ease of

manner, as if he had indeed been a beloved brother, whose studies she was sharing, during his temporary abode, in his college vacations, beneath his paternal roof.

CHAPTER VI.

SOLICITUDES OF AFFECTION.

Lord Hervey spoke too truly when he said that the keen air of the north was loaded to him with points and daggers; he daily became more and more sensible that it was an atmosphere that he could not long exist in with impunity; but in proportion as he made this discovery he made also another, which was that in no other should he be sensible of

so much happiness as he had found within the walls of the Rectory at Nethercross.

It was now again one of the periods when the little circle was always cheered by the company of Mr. and Mrs. Barton, and their children. To Lord Hervey's unsophisticated mind their addition to the party was an addition to his enjoyment, for who, whose own heart is right, can see the happiness of conjugal affection, and the innocence of infancy without feeling his very soul refreshed by the contemplation of joys so pure, so paradisaical!

If Lord Hervey were pleased with Mr. and Mrs. Barton, they were yet more so with him. Henry talked to him on English History, and Shakespeare and Addison and Johnson; and had the rare good fortune to find in him a young man better read in the sterling classics of the last century, than in the ephemeral yet overwhelming literature of the day; whilst Mrs. Barton admired his politeness, venerated

his piety, and, in short, compared him to Sir Charles Grandison, beyond which she had no idea eulogium could go. And then her sister, her dear sister, if she should be the Harriett Byron, the Lady Grandison of the domestic romance!

"And after all, my love," said she to her husband, as they walked one morning together to Mrs. Brayswick's, "I do think Catherine likes him better than she ever did Colonel Hamilton; for she's always the same with him —always kind and cheerful. But with Colonel Hamilton she sometimes seemed out of spirits, and as often vexed with him as pleased; and well she might; for he was very provoking at times: sometimes as agreeable as could be wished, and at others, rude and proud and disdainful, just as if he had been a nobleman."

Mrs. Barton soon, however, saw that Lord Hervey's health was in a very precarious state, and she could not help letting her opinion re-

specting it appear, in the anxiety with which she sought to guard him from exposure to the evening air, and the care she took to prepare him every thing that she thought might allay the cough which, short and suppressed as it was, yet sounded in her ears like a funereal knell.

Her attentions at last attracted the notice of her father, and seeing her preparing a decoction of figs and rasins, which her little son and daughter were attentively watching the progress of,—"What," cried he, "is any thing the matter with my darlings? No hooping-cough I hope, or measles hatching up."

"No," said Amelia, "I think if you look at them you need not be very uneasy on the score of their health; I wish poor Lord Hervey were half as well, I should not be so busy as I am."

"Aye, poor fellow," said the Rector, "I am almost afraid for him," and so saying, he went into his little study, where he found Lord

Hervey deeply engaged with Grotius, "On the Truth of the Christian Religion."

As the young student looked up, his fevered cheek struck Mr. Neville's eye for the first time, as affording too convincing a proof that he ought to try some more genial climate before it became too late even to hope. No selfish calculation ever found admittance into Mr. Neville's breast; and the moment he felt convinced that change of air was necessary for his pupil's health, that moment he became anxious for him to try it without loss of time; nor did a thought of the pecuniary loss he should sustain by his removal, intrude itself for a single moment into his mind, to divert the bent of his arguments or weaken his force.

"My dear Lord Hervey," said he, "you have read too long this morning. You look flushed and exhausted."

"It is not my book that must be blamed for my looks," replied Lord Hervey, "on the con-

trary, I am indebted to it for making me almost forget a tightness across my chest, and a pain when I breathe, which I am always sensible of, when the air is so keen as it is to day. Indeed I may almost say with Gray,—

> 'In vain to me the ruddy mornings shine,
> And redd'ning Phœbus lifts his golden fire;
> The birds in vain their amorous descants join,
> Or cheerful fields resume their green attire!

for this spring tries me more severely than winter has ever done before."

"I see it does," said Mr. Neville, and therefore, my dear young friend, you will excuse me if I urge pretty peremptorily, the duty you owe to yourself of going immediately to the mild air of Devonshire, or the south of France, and nursing yourself there, for two or three years; and by that time your constitution will, I hope, be fixed; and all those unpleasant symptoms disappear, to return no more."

Lord Hervey's cheek flushed a still deeper dye, for a moment—but the next it was pale; and in a tone of deep dejection, he said—

"You may well speak of the duty I owe myself; for there is indeed no other person to whom my health can be a matter of any concern; excepting as the kindness of a few friends might make them wish to see me at ease, rather than suffering.

"Nay, my dear Lord Hervey, you cannot really entertain such a gloomy sentiment as this; —with rank, and fortune, and amiable dispositions, and the power of doing good; think how much you have to be thankful for, and you will see that it is your duty to endeavour to add health to the number of your blessings, because without it you cannot turn any of them to the account you ought."

"Forgive me, dear Sir—the momentary despondency of an invalid made me forget myself; I ought to be glad to know that there is no one

whom my removal from this world, if it be the will of God to call me early away, will make unhappy.—Why should I be so selfish as to wish it?"

Mr. Neville saw that he was agitated, and taking up Grotius, and beginning to read aloud, in order to give him time to recover himself; they both gradually lost sight of all sorrows and anxieties, belonging merely to earth, in the solemn and beautiful anticipation of eternal life, and ever improving capacities of happiness which were held out in the pages before them.

Lord Hervey, unable to refute the arguments of the worthy Rector, or the affectionate entreaties of his eldest daughter, was at length compelled, reluctantly, to fix a day for his departure into Devonshire, on condition, that he should resume his studies at the Rectory, when the settled skies of summer might allow him to re-visit the north with impunity.

The moment of his farewell dissolved the

female part of the family into tears. Old Rachel said, as she turned away, with her apron to her eyes, that he was too good to live; and Mrs. Barton and Catherine expressed alternately their hopes and fears for his recovery, till cheered by the preponderance given to the former, in Mr. Neville's confidence in the youth of the object of their anxiety, and the efficacy of a balmy air, when resorted to, before any tubercular formation in the lungs, had actually taken place;—they resumed by degrees their domestic employments and accustomed recreations.

Nevertheless, to Catherine, the departure of Lord Hervey, was an event not to have been desired; for all the painful thoughts which had been for a time diverted, by her anxiety for his comforts, returned, with added force, as soon as she was left at leisure to indulge them.

Mrs. Barton saw how entirely her sister's mind was occupied. She would have flattered

herself that Lord Hervey might have some share in her abstraction; but the perfect composure with which Catherine always talked of him, dissipated this idea whenever his name was introduced; for even Mrs. Barton's simplicity of heart could not hide from her the knowledge, that, when a beloved object is the theme of conversation, it is not easy to choose the exact medium between loquacity and reserve.

Unable to discover the cause of Catherine's gravity, and unwilling to enquire into it, this affectionate sister rejoiced sincerely in the prospect of change for her, which presented itself at this time, in the form of a very kind invitation, from Louisa Longcroft, to accompany her to London; and to this invitation, were added a few lines from Mr. Longcroft himself, graciously assuring her, that it would give him great pleasure to receive her, with Mr. Neville's permission, as his guest in Berkeley Square; and

that a place in his carriage would, in that case, be at her service, that day week.

A journey to London is no longer, in this age of loco-motion, an event of the importance it was fifty years ago; when a single visit to the Capital, gave the happy lady who had been fortunate enough to find herself there, a superiority over her female neighbours for all the remainder of her days. Nevertheless, at the distance of Nethercross, with the quiet manners and home-spun notions of the inhabitants to boot, it was still no trifling subject of arrangement, and congratulation.

"How very kind in Louisa," exclaimed Mrs. Barton, her eyes sparkling with pleasure, "and really very polite in Mr. Longcroft—you must go, my dear Catherine—it will do you good; you enjoyed London so much when we were there together. I'm sure my father will wish you to go again."

"I own I should like it," said Catherine, but she sighed as she spoke, for the thought of mixing in the circles that Hamilton had adorned, of seeing his intimates, perchance of hearing his name, recalled his image with a tenderness, which made her, the moment after, scarcely know whether she had rather remain in the seclusion where she might nurse it without restraint, or venture into the fashionable world, in order to judge for herself of the habits and pursuits, to which he had so long devoted himself, that it could scarcely be expected he ever would relinquish them. "Yes," she continued, "I certainly should like to be with dear Louisa; but then, Amelia, I do not like leaving the Rectory, when you are with us; and I should like it still less after you go away, because my dear father would be left all alone."

"No, it is much better as it is," said Mrs.

Barton, "indeed it could not have happened better; we can stay with my father, at least the children and I can, almost all the time you are away; and Henry will come backward and forward, and we shall have your letters, and we shall be quite gay with hearing of your gaieties."

And in came Mr. Neville to give his vote in the debate, and quickly was it settled by her affectionate father and sister, that Catherine should spend a month or six weeks in the metropolis; and then there was another contest between the sisters; for Mrs. Barton would force upon Catherine almost all the finery she had.

"You shall have my lace scarf and veil, dear Catherine; they will suit a carriage better than hawthorn hedges—and my watch and chain; you will want a watch, for Mr. Longcroft is mighty particular, you know, with

respect to time—and my pearls too, you must and shall have them; married women have no business with such things; at least married women with families, like me."

The pleasure of thinking that their dear Catherine was going to be amused and admired —and to enjoy herself,—gave this affectionate family party, an hilarity like that which many would only affect at the unexpected arrival of a guest. Nevertheless, Catherine could scarcely reconcile the apparent selfishness of leaving them, with their disinterested love, and now brought in prudence to back her arguments for staying at home.

"I cannot bear"—said she, "to spend so much upon mere pleasure, as this journey will cost altogether,——"

But her father interrupted her. "It is not your pleasure alone," he said, "it is all our pleasure; when we come therefore to divide

the sum total among all who will be gratified, we shall find the quantum to each very deeply purchased."

"Ah, but my dear father, you would grudge it on yourself, I know," said Catherine.

"Why, as for that, I might grudge the same kind of thing, because on me it would be thrown away; but I may not grudge myself some share of it; for, to say the truth, I think I shall come to London, at the expiration of your furlough, and take charge of you home again; for I have long wished to go there, on a little business of my own.—Not that I mean to set off, like Parson Adams, with my manuscript sermons in my pocket."

The thought of having her father with her any part of her stay in London, and of returning home with him, decided Catherine; and she sprung up stairs, to her own room, to answer Louisa's note, with that happy elasti-

city of youth which is always ready to admit sunshine through clouds, like the bird that sings as soon as the shower ceases,—

"Forgetful that his wings are wet the while."

CHAPTER VII.

CHANGE OF SCENE.

How much are we the creatures of place and circumstance! A few days effected as complete a metamorphose in Catherine Neville's habits, occupations, appearance, every thing but her heart, as if she had been touched by the wand of fairyism. No longer the "Goddess of the Mountains," rejoicing in the pure breath and ever-varying features of nature, and up

with the morning to gather flowers whilst the dew yet sparkled upon them, she now found herself entrenched in all the forms of a London season, in the house of one to whom form was religion, and appearance essence. Instead of enjoying on foot, as she had before done with her brother-in-law and her sister, the animating spectacle which the perpetual throng of passengers, and the rich display of every thing beautiful in art that the streets and shops of the metropolis afford; instead of visiting the Museums, the Panoramas, the Galleries, and the Exhibitions of scientific or ingenious novelties, which every day afford food to an enquiring mind; instead of finishing every active and well-employed morning, with an evening at the theatre, or at a concert, or some other rational amusement, leaving delightful and improving food for retrospection in the mind; she now saw herself, whenever she went out of the house, condemned to the languid imprisonment of a

carriage, or to a monotonous promenade in one undeviating line, in the Park, every day at the same hour, and with the additional uniformity of every day meeting the same faces.

Instead of seeing the roses and carnations springing around her, in living loveliness, she was forced to content herself with looking, at a respectful distance, at a few plants in the veranda, which, after lingering awhile in smoke and dust, were continually obliged to be sent back to their native nurseries for their health, drooping and colourless as thorough-paced belles, at the close of a fashionable campaign. Instead of early hours, simple meals, and days too short for her domestic duties, and social endearments, she was now obliged to remain in her dressing-room till eleven o'clock; to see the finest part of the day wasted at a breakfast-table, elaborately set out, but enlivened with no conversation beyond what the "Mirror of the Mode" gave rise to, in the accounts it

afforded of arrivals, and presentations, and promotions, and preferments; to find the same splendour and the same tediousness proportionably increased at dinner, and to destroy the evening in going from one rout to another, alike crowded and alike dull; where the appearance of apathy was assumed as the reality of elegance; and where any desire on the part of a stranger to enter into conversation, or offer a courtesey, would have been scorned as an impertinence, or sneered at as a vulgarity.

Catherine, however, was not of a temper to look on the dark side of a picture. She saw Louisa submit herself entirely to all the forms of dullness, and restraints of etiquette, which her father's pride and ostentation imposed upon her: she saw that Louisa felt as fully as herself that whatever appearance of novelty or excitement a Metropolitan circle of fashion might present upon its surface, there was a sameness in the nature of its pursuits, a wearisomeness

in the pettiness of the rules it laid down for itself, and, above all, a coldness in its tones, a heartlessness in its maxims, which inclined them both to place it in their estimate of real happiness, and rationality of existence, far below a seemingly much humbler sphere in the country, surrounded with natural enjoyments; commanding opportunities of usefulness, and, above all, possessing "leisure to be good."

Nevertheless, whilst she continued Mr. Longcroft's guest, she felt that he was entitled to her gratitude for his politeness, for beyond that, his hospitality did not affect to extend. As she could not be charmed with his manners she was contented to admire his arrangements, as exhibited in the regularity of his household, and the consistency of all his appointments.

In the same manner she endeavoured to forget the cold feelings, and cautious policy of people of fashion, in dwelling on the elegance of their exterior, and the polish of their dic-

tion; and consoled herself for the small share of attention which, as merely the daughter of a country clergyman, she received from them, by considering, that as little was expected from her in return; and that the shade in which she might be cast by her want of fortune and connections was preferable to being brought forward in so strong a light as to render the deficiencies of which her modesty made her conscious, liable to the animadversions of all who had had more opportunities of acquirement than herself.

There was another very material consideration with respect to Catherine's equanimity, and her security against those attacks on her *amour propre*, to which most young women, situated as she now was, would have been perpetually exposed. She had not come to London with the idea of causing a sensation, or the hope of making conquests. She neither expected or desired either one or the other. If

her heart had not been too full, her head was too clear to suffer her to give way to any of those reveries and anticipations, which form alternately the pleasures and disappointments of that period of life when we blow our own bubbles; and envy them as they mount, for a moment, into the pure ether.

She was happy in the society of Louisa Longcroft; and in Hamilton's absence, not all the Metropolis could have afforded her any other source of gratification. Not that she was insensible to the pleasure of Edward Longcroft's conversation, and the kindness of his attentions; but she could have done without them. She valued him when present, but she did not miss him when he was absent: and she might have said to him and to all the rest of the world, as the American Indian women say, when solicited by lovers, in the absence of their husbands,—"The friend that stands before my eyes, prevents my seeing you."

Edward's daily errands, however, into Berkeley Square, were to pay his devoirs to his lovely cousin; though a stranger might have been puzzled to decide which of the two ladies, between whom he took his constant seat, was the object of his preference. He presented new books to Louisa, but he read them to Catherine. He led Louisa to the pianoforte, but he chose the pieces that Catherine liked best. She was fond of the "old school," particularly of Mathew Locke.

"His compositions are so joyous, and yet so grand," said she, one day, looking over his music for the 'Tempest,' "it always makes me hold up my head, when I hear them."

Ever after this eulogium Edward also became an admirer of Mathew Locke.

"I like to see Catherine hold up her head," he would say, as he placed the rich and inspiring harmonies before his cousin, and soon would Catherine unconsciously shake back her

clustering curls, and look all ear, all inspiration, as she listened to strains at once lively and noble.

> 'Nor wanting power to mitigate and 'swage,
> With solemn touches, troubled thoughts, and chase
> Anguish and doubt, and fear, and sorrow and pain,
> From mortal, or immortal mind.'

Edward, with a better taste in music, was not so good a performer as Hamilton, for whose violin, his flute appeared to Catherine a very unsatisfactory substitute; nevertheless, he played "quite well enough for a gentleman," as the phrase is; but he was more skilful with his pencil, and was passionately fond of exercising it. Louisa was one morning painting on china: the designs were from the antique.—Edward drew for her a faun, a muse, a votive altar, a chariot race, a sacrifice; every thing his memory or invention could supply him with; but from time to time, he transferred a slip of paper to

Catherine, with a church, a cottage, a tree, a ruin, a winding road, or some other rural object, connected with Nethercross, and its vicinity. At last Louisa's eye was caught by a group of figures.

"What have you there," said she, "a procession?"—It was the party at the Ebbing and Flowing Well; and with such spirit were the individuals delineated, that each might be immediately recognised; Catherine standing near the well, between Edward and Lord Hervey; and Louisa a little more apart, with Mr. Dacres at her side. Louisa coloured deeply, as she looked at it; she turned her eyes towards Edward, who coloured also; the moment after they filled with tears, and she left the room. Edward's first impulse was to tear the drawing into a thousand pieces, and Catherine swept the fragments off the table, and put them into the fire-place; neither of them looked at each other, neither of them uttered a word; and their silent

embarassment was only interrupted, by the entrance of Mr. Longcroft, with Lord Blakeney, a young nobleman, who, although he rarely paid Catherine the compliment of addressing a single word to her, was nevertheless, always an acceptable visitor in her sight, because he sometimes mentioned the name of Hamilton.

Edward had often been surprised at the attention Catherine paid to the "infinite deal of nothing," sent forth by this Exquisite, as he lolled on the sofa, with his gloved hands alternately raising an eye-glass, or a scented handkerchief; but this morning enabled him to account for it with more certainty than satisfaction:—he had before attributed to her desire for general information, the eagerness with which she listened to Lord Blakeney's marvellous narrations of marches, and countermarches; and hair-breadth 'scapes, and perilous chances; and to Mr. Longcroft's financial calculations on the expences of the British troops,

and their respective stations; but a few broken sentences from Lord Blakeney, introduced in the intervals of a lengthened yawn, which could not have been excused by Mr. Longcroft, had he not placed it to the account of Louisa's lengthened absence, put the whole in a new light.

"They seem to be doing nothing on the continent, just now," said his Lordship.—"Hamilton writes me word, that he is as lazy as ever he was at College, and that he is as tired of Brussels, with all its gaieties, as ever he was of Plymouth, when we were quartered there, waiting to embark for America, and beguiling the time, by laying wagers, which could count the tiles on the opposite houses, the fastest."

Catherine's heart beat audibly at this mention of Hamilton's name; but Louisa fortunately entering at that instant, she flattered herself her emotion escaped the observation of Edward, for it was only his eye she dreaded:

he had however turned away, and directly after his cousin came in he took his leave. Catherine longed for the comfort of being alone, but she could not leave the room, with propriety, whilst Lord Blakeney remained—she therefore took up her netting, and retired to the window: her thoughts dwelt upon Hamilton with painful incertitude.

What a trifle will awaken a train of contradictory feelings in the heart that is solely occupied with one image! Hamilton had written to Lord Blakeney,—at any rate then, he was well, this was a happiness to think of; but he had not written to her, and a sigh followed the thought—still he was not happy away from her, he complained of languor—he longed for the excitement of danger.

"I know exactly how he feels," said she to herself; but she sighed again;—for already she had acquired that knowledge of the heart of him, to whom she had too trustingly given her

own, to be aware that what her feelings would be in a similar situation, was by no means the standard by which she might certainly judge of his.

CHAPTER VIII.

WATERLOO HEROES AND WATERLOO BLUE.

Two days after Lord Blakeney's assertion, that there seemed to be nothing doing on the continent, the intelligence arrived of that battle which decided the fate of Europe:—of that victory which, from the suddenness of its achievements added the charm of surprise to the brilliance of success; and intoxicated with

exultation and delight the nation under whose banners it was won.

True, many wept the streams of gallant blood, with which the triumphs seemed in the eyes of humanity, too dearly bought,—true, many a wife, many a mother had to deplore "the beautiful!—the brave!"—in whose existence the happiness of her own was wrapped—but grief, shuns observation—sighs and tears seek lonely walls; and amidst the glare of artificial day, the strains of military music—the shouts of rejoicing,—the widow and the orphan were unseen, and unthought of:—even Catherine, humane and considerate as she was, found herself carried away by the torrent of public feeling.

Hamilton had distinguished himself, and she hastily averted her eyes from the long appalling "list of killed and wounded," to rivet them again on the name of one dearer to her than ever, when she thought of the dreadful chances which might have snatched him from her. Oh

now it was that she did indeed feel happy to be in London, in the very heart's pulse of the kingdom! where nothing else was thought of, nothing else talked of, nothing else heard of, but Waterloo and Wellington, and the bravery of the men whom he had led on so gallantly, to conquer or to die. In a week, every beau was parading Bond-street, in Wellington boots; every belle was dressed in Waterloo blue; every print-shop was full of portraits of "*Le vainqueur des vainqueurs de l'Europe*," and the views of classic Italy and romantic Switzerland, were compelled to give place to hasty sketches of "*Quatre Bras*," "*Chateau de Ligny*," "*Village de Waterloo*," "*La Ferme de Papelotte*," "*Pont de vieux Genappe*." "*La Haie Sainte*," "*La Belle Alliance*;"—in short, of every spot that could in the remotest degree, be connected with the glorious field of action.

All these, wretched as most of them were, in point of intrinsic merit, Catherine eagerly

bought, though she coloured deeply as she selected them, whilst Louisa was making other purchases far better calculated to please the eye of taste. She also suddenly found out that she wanted some maps, and took care to include in them one of Belgium, and a plan of the field of battle; and once possessed of the documents, she studied them with an assiduity that soon enabled her to comprehend the position of the different bodies, and the nature of all their movements, as exactly as if they had been pointed out to her on the spot.

One morning Louisa came in, from a ride with Edward Longcroft, and caught her earnestly poring over her plan, to find where Marechal Blucher's right wing was formed *en potence*, and what troops were placed in *echelon*, and what columns were opposed to the enemy's squares.

"Why Catherine," said she, "you will be quite a politician, and a tactician. You would

have made as good a heroine as your namesake of Russia. You would soon have learned to calculate how many fighting men you could bring into the field. But leave your *tirailleurs*, and *voltigeurs*, and *elites*, and *velites* and come with me, to see them all as large as life, for we are going into Leicester Square, to see the Panorama of Waterloo."

"The Panorama!" exclaimed Catherine, her face all in a glow, in an instant, "what, is it possible to have got all the details of such an event in so short a time?"

"Yes," said Louisa, "and maugre the vulgarity of Panoramas in general, this is to be an exception. It is decreed that it is to be the fashion—and, therefore, my father says that we may, nay must go; in order that we may be able to talk about it, to-night, at the Marchioness of Sainsbury's *conversazione*. So come, my dear, fold up the field, and let us go; or we shall not have daylight enough to distinguish

one hero from another.—Will you, Sir," she added, laughingly to Edward, "ring for the carriage, if you can so far rouse yourself out of your profound reverie, as to stretch your hand out to the bell."

Edward started up. "It will require no great effort," said he, "I was only thinking with Touchstone, 'Men may grow wiser every day,' it is the first time that ever I heard breaking of ribs was sport for ladies.'"

"But if they must be broken," said Louisa, "you would not, I hope, have the ladies so cruel or so stupid as to take no interest as to whose may be fractured, and whose remain whole."

Edward could not, or would not smile; and Catherine, as he handed her into the carriage, avoided his eyes, she knew not why. Arrived however, at the Panorama, every thought was instantly absorbed in the scene before her. Scarcely could she breathe as she threw her

first eager glances round the canvas, teeming with figures and groupes of intense interest.—Her whole soul swam in her tearful eyes, as she gazed on the horrors of war, and for the first time in her life comprehended the conflicting tumults of a field of battle. Troops charging at the point of the bayonet, rifle corps in ambuscade, taking their murderous aim, cavalry in full gallop, sweeping down all before them, heroes meeting hand to hand, and foot to foot; sad groups of dead and dying on the ground, and more sad still a few solitary sufferers, here and there, gaining a spot retired from the general carnage, where they had time to recal, in their expiring moments, dear forms beloved, and scenes never to be beheld again!

Poor Catherine's heart swelled almost to bursting, as she stood gazing on the scene, regardless, indeed unconscious of the crowds that pressed upon her, eager to discover the resemblances in which they were individually inter-

ested. Edward Longcroft pointed out to her and Louisa the great hero of the day, surrounded by the officers of his staff; but Catherine's eyes were rivetted on one who was leading on his regiment with a grace and spirit all his own. She could not ask what regiment it was —but the question would have been unnecessary, for Hamilton alone could have served as the model of its commander. The name, however, with which she durst not trust her lips, was soon echoed about among the surrounding spectators.

"There is Hamilton!" exclaimed a voice near her, which she knew to be Lord Blakeney's, "see how gallantly he bears up against the charge of the French cavalry!"

Poor Catherine! with what proud affection did her heart throb at that moment! her figure seemed to gain dignity, in addition to its elegance, as she felt herself the betrothed, the beloved of one so noble and so brave; for

how could she, at such a moment distrust his faith!

"Yes there is Hamilton," said another, "it is like him too; he looks well on horseback, and so he thinks."

"I dare say," replied Lord Blakeney, "he did not think how he looked, just then. He acquitted himself gloriously; his regiment has gained as much honour as *ces beaux chevalier gris*, in the middle of the field, that Napoleon was so much struck with."

"Ah poor Napoleon," said a third, "'a horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!' but these Waterloo heroes, they will cut us all out, this next winter, Blakeney."

"They will indeed, unless half of them are considerate enough to die of their wounds."

At that moment a lady, with a spreading bonnet that shut out a spectator on each side, squeezed herself in between the speakers, apologizing at every step with—

"Pray Sir, let me beg Ma'am; if you will just have the goodness, Sir, to stand a little aside; just an inch or two. I only want to look at poor dear General Picton. I knew him so well."

And whilst she was speaking she bustled into the front, and soon singled out that gallant officer, expiring on the earth—"Ah, there he is indeed, poor dear man! we were so intimate! Bless me, how shockingly natural it is!—how well the feathers are done!—I am afraid I shall faint.—And there is Lord Ponsonby too, beside him, and Sir Colin Halkett—what capital likenesses!—how affecting it all is! And who is that fine young man that supports his head? Where's the book?—Pray, Sir, give me leave a moment.—O, it is one of the Mortimer family,—and there is Colonel Hamilton, I declare, too; and as handsome as ever!—What a good attitude!—Lady Charlotte Forsyth should be here," she added, in a whisper, to an

affected looking young woman, who was surveying, through her glass, the animate, more than the inanimate forms around.

Catherine turned away. Louisa saw that she was pale. "You feel the heat oppressive," said she, "we will go home."

Catherine made no reply, and they returned to Berkley Square, with scarcely a comment on the subject they had been contemplating.

It was not till the second dinner bell had rung that Catherine made her appearance in the drawing room;—her eyes exhibited the traces of tears, and she cast them down as she entered, to avoid the look of scrutinising enquiry, with which Edward Longcroft regarded her.

"I wish my Lord Blakeney would please to be a little more exact," said Mr. Longcroft, taking out his watch, and comparing it with the time-piece; "he is five minutes beyond the hour.—I am with the Horse-Guards to a

moment, I set my repeater as I passed, in coming from the house."

"Is it Lord Blakeney you are waiting for?" asked Catherine, in a tone of agreeable surprise. "I did not know you expected him, I am very glad he is coming."

"He is very fortunate," said Edward, somewhat sarcastically; "at least he might be—

'Blest, if his happiness he knew,'

if he could have imagined the pleasure you seem to feel in the idea of seeing him, I should suppose he would, for once, have tried to be punctual to his engagement."

Catherine's colour rose, but she smiled without any embarrassment, as she replied—"And I should suppose it would not make the slightest difference in any of his lordship's movements; it does not follow that the interest should be mutual,—but I must own I like

to hear him talk, he has so much information."

"On what subject?" asked Edward, drily. Catherine was not prepared to give a decided answer to the question. Edward turned to his cousin,—"Louisa, help Catherine out—you have known Lord Blakeney longer than she has:—What are the principle points on which you would apply to his lordship for information?"

"An arrival, or a departure," said Louisa, laughing, "a marriage or a ball."

"It is not very polite in his lordship, at any rate," said Mr. Longcroft, again taking out his watch; "to keep one waiting in this manner; I remember a marriage being broken off, between the Cliffords of Yorkshire, and the Peverills of Derbyshire, in consequence of young Mr. Clifford keeping Sir Thomas Peverill waiting dinner, till the venison was overdone; and, by-the-bye, I believe we have

venison too, to-day, have we not Miss Longcroft? Ring the bell, Edward, we will wait no longer."

At that moment, however, his lordship saved his credit by making his appearance, and the pleasure that brightened Catherine's eyes, as he entered, was the more apparent as it contrasted with the coldness with which the rest of the party, from a variety of minor feelings, which predominated at the moment, listened to his apologies.

"Fine girl! beautiful countenance!" said his lordship to himself, as he looked at Catherine, whilst he offered his arm to Louisa, "a sensible girl, too, I am certain,—wants nothing but the stamp of fashion,—if she had been introduced at Almack's by a leader, and taken up as the Brinsleys were, she might have made her fortune in a single season."

Nothing else was talked of at dinner but

Waterloo and its heroes, what else indeed could be talked of?—what else would have been listened to? The battle and its consequences were discussed in every shape, though the view taken of them varied according to the complexion of the parties.—Lord Blakeney detailed the fêtes both public and private, in embryo, and already announced, that were to be given in celebration of the event;—Mr. Longcroft calculated the difference it would make to the landed interest in the price of corn, and expressed his fears that rents would fall;—Edward, with animation beaming in his eyes, enlarged upon the benefits that would, he hoped, accrue to all Europe, in the downfal of a power, as gigantic in ability as formidable in despotism;—Catherine thought of Hamilton, and said nothing;—Louisa enquired what provision would be made for the widows and orphans of the slain;—and Lord Blakeney

voted Waterloo Blue the frightfullest colour in the rainbow, more especially as it regarded pantaloons.

"You will see plenty of it, however," he continued, "to-morrow night, at my mother's ball. All the walls hung with it; *entre nous*, her ladyship is quite happy to think that she has the good fortune to be the first in the field of commemoration. I suppose she will make it an annual affair. It would have been capital if we could have got a dozen or two of the heroes, to figure in on the occasion.

'Sans arms, sans legs, sans teeth, sans every thing.'

"but there are no importations yet. Somebody said, though, that Hamilton was coming—it would have been an excellent good thing, to have seen him stumble upon Lady Charlotte Forsyth, just at the very threshhold."

"I should think it a very bad thing, my

lord," said Mr. Longcroft, "should it occur at my house—I have a great respect for Sir William Forsyth—he is a very excellent character—a man of good fortune, old family, and considerable parliamentary influence. I respect him very much—very useful too in a committee—will sit for a whole day, without stirring, on any public affairs."

"So much the worse for his private affairs," said his lordship, "Lady Charlotte holds a select committee of two, whilst he 'good easy man,' is sitting on turnpike roads, and descanting on nuisances; I think her ladyship wanted to place you on her committee list, at one time, did she not, Mr. Edward?"

"If she did," said Edward, "I was too dull to find it out; and if I had availed myself of it, I certainly should not now be coxcomb enough to remember it."

"Spoken most discreetly, and like a true

Squire of Dames,'" said Lord Blakeney, laughing off the reproof, which, however, he had good sense enough to feel.

"Spoken like a man of honor," said Mr. Longcroft, "I should be very sorry if my nephew could jest with any thing pertaining to Sir William Forsyth—he has had annoyance enough about his wife's thoughtless vanity, already. I believe, however, Colonel Hamilton acted like a gentleman in the affair of the duel, and I must say it would be very bad taste in him to attempt, after what has past, to renew his acquaintance with Lady Charlotte."

"Bad taste!" repeated poor Catherine to herself; "is that a term by which to designate a crime."

Alas! how bitter a reflection it was for her, that she should for a moment, admit the possibility of any thing criminal in the conduct of the man she loved!

"No," she continued, in her train of thought,

" he is not capable of any thing actually wicked ; his vanity leads him into the appearance of vice, and his vivacity lends him false arguments, which he does not himself believe in, to vindicate conduct which he would never forgive himself for practising ; but I known him better than the world does," and her cheek flushed with conscious exultation. " I know him as nature intended him to be, and as he his."

Having settled this point to her own satisfaction, Catherine took courage to look up again.

" It is very singular," thought she, " that whenever Colonel Hamilton's name is mentioned, Edward Longcroft always fixes his eyes upon me so strangely, and then Louisa looks first at him and then at me, and then at him again, and looks quite grave. Dear Louisa ! perhaps she guesses my secret, and does not want Edward to find it out—or perhaps she is

displeased that I do not tell it to her myself. Alas ! I should be too happy to repose it with her, and have the support and comfort of her counsels, but, she is one of the many that only knows Hamilton as he appears, and seems not even to wish to know any thing more of him.

CHAPTER IX.

MATTERS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE.

From the day that the news of the battle of Waterloo had arrived in town, Catherine had waited the coming in of the post, with anxiety. Hamilton surely could not be negligent as not to write to her, so cruel as to keep her in such painful suspense respecting himself. The letters were always brought at breakfast time, and were placed on a silver salver exactly before

Mr. Longcroft, who, after inspecting, most minutely through his glass, the writings and seals of each, distributed them, with all the slowness of official dignity, among the parties to whom they might respectively be addressed. How was poor Catherine's patience tried, when, at last, amidst a greater number than usual, her eager glance descried one with the Nethercross post-mark upon it!

"Letter for you, Miss Longcroft, from Giggleswick, about your school I suppose; I think it is Mr. Dacres's arms; and another from York, with the Duncombe crest,—most likely from Miss Duncombe, to enquire, if you mean to be at the races. And here is one for you, Edward: I know neither the hand nor the seal, but it has the Exeter post-mark."

"It is from Lord Hervey, I hope," said Edward, as he extended his hand for it; "yes, it is; and I trust with a better account of his health, than his last contained."

At length Catherine's turn came :—"A letter for you Miss Neville—a double one. It is your father's cypher, '*E. N.*' "

Catherine bowed her head in silence, as she took it, for she durst not trust her voice with a single word. She cast a despairing glance at the long columns of debates which the "Morning Herald" presented, and which she too well knew must all be read, listened to, or seemed to be listened to, and descanted upon, before Louisa durst make any motion towards rising. At length they were finished, even to the counting of the "ayes and noes," on the question of the preceding evening; Mr. Longcroft himself gave the signal for dispersion, and Catherine flew to her own room with her letter. It was from her father, and she kissed the direction ere she broke the seal: but when she opened it, the hand-writing of Hamilton immediately greeted her eyes, in the enclosure. She burst into tears—she pressed it to her lips and to her

heart. The dangers he had so recently been exposed to, seemed to make her regard him as some treasure newly restored, doubly, trebly valued!

She put his letter into her bosom, and began to read her father's, but it was impossible to fix her attention; and, as soon as she had satisfied herself that he was well, and rejoiced with her over Hamilton's safety, she reverted to *the* letter, the well-known seal of which had been already broken by her father, and, with breathless agitation, she read far more quickly than she would, the effusions, which had they been ten times as long as the longest of the indefatigable Richardson's, she would still have deemed too short.

"My fondly beloved Catherine,

"Long ere this, fame will have bruited, even to the sequestered inhabitants of Nethercross, the achievements of their countrymen in

the field of Waterloo. Our victory was severely contested, and dearly has it been bought, as far as the effusion of human blood, the loss, the waste, I was going to say, of human life is concerned. Yes, my Catherine, when the fury of the battle was beginning to subside, when I paused, for a moment, and surveyed the ensanguined plain, the hapless dying, and the happier dead, I felt I was less of a hero than I had imagined myself in the heat of action, and I almost caught myself saying with your favorite Cowper—

> 'War is a game, which, were their subjects wise,
> Kings would not play at.'

And then my Catherine's image came before me—

> '———like a sweet form
> Of fairie, following a perturbed shape,
> Of giant terror————.'

I thought she would have wept my memory,

had it been my fate to have been numbered among the dead, with more partial tears than I deserved, and I felt grateful to Heaven for granting me the treasure of a pure, tender, devoted heart, and for sparing me for the happiness of proviug, how, above price, I value it.

" It is possible, my Catherine, that you may see me, almost as soon as this letter. I am commissioned with despatches to the Duke of York, and though it is not improbable that I may have to return here immediately after I shall have delivered them, yet it is, I hope, more probable that the business connected with them may detain me long enough to allow of my reaching Nethercross, if only for an hour. This sweet anticipation gives me resolution to say adieu ! till that happy moment. What a contrast will its calm, its endearments, its delightful associations be to the " hurley-burley," the confusion, the noise, orders, enquiries, congratulations, conjectures, condolences, amidst

which I am writing; and which scarcely allow me an instant to request my regards to your father, and to conjure you to believe me always, 'e'en in the cannon's mouth,' my Catherine's

"devoted,

"ARTHUR HAMILTON.

"*Brussels*, 18—."

When Catherine had somewhat recovered from the agitation of gratitude, tenderness and delight, with which this genuine effusion of Hamilton's feelings filled her breast, the thought that he might already be in London, or even on his way to Nethercross, plunged her into a state of intolerable suspense. Gladly would she have thrown herself into the first public conveyance for the north, with Juliet's language on her lips—

"Gallop apace, ye fiery-footed steeds,"

but, alas! propriety, etiquette, her own delicacy, all forbade. She opened her father's

letter again, to give it a more deliberate perusal.

"That Hamilton has been preserved *unscathed*," said the good man, "amidst the carnage and misery which the wickedness of men inflicts upon each other, is indeed to me, not only a matter of heart-felt rejoicing, but of solemn gratitude. Our heavenly Father calls his children away, precisely at that moment when their good requires no further trial; or when their evil might be increased by longer stay;—we have, therefore, the consolation of believing, that he has been spared to us, for the purpose of enabling him to become a better man; and fervently do I pray, that he may live to shew his natural graces (and he has many to be thankful for) increased by his grateful perception of the blessed source from which they spring; and that we may finally see in him that true dignity of human nature, the enlightenment

of the understanding, and purification of the will; in which alone, it consists; by which sacred union of attributes, alone, it is, that man becomes again the image and likeness of his Maker, which he was formed to be at his creation."

Devoutly did Catherine's heart respond to her father's prayer.

"But what shall I do, my dear Catherine," he continued, with his characteristic simplicity, "with our Waterloo hero, in your absence? He will miss you at every turn and corner, as I do. It is unlucky that your sister and Henry Barton left me last week; or else, with their assistance, I might, perhaps, have managed to have got up something like a little festival for his welcome: but as it is, I fear it would be only a doleful attempt to amuse him with Mrs. Brayswick, and smiling Fanny, and the Messrs. Pugh; and-by-the bye, I believe Fanny will

forgive me, if I betray her secret, and inform you, though, mind you, the information is not given, *ex cathedra*, that from the report of certain preparations of white ribbons and plum cake; and the fact, as vouched for by the mercurial Mally Garbutt, of a letter having gone to London, directed to 'Mrs. Pinup, Milliner, St. Paul's Church Yard,' and another to 'Mr. Shortstitch, Tailor, and Man-mercer, corner of East-cheap, Fish-street Hill;' it is shrewdly conjectured, that ere many more moons fill their horns, we may gain an extension of our visiting list, in Mr. and Mrs. Pugh, junior. Most heartily do I wish them all the happiness they can desire for themselves, and that happiest and best state; which, as St. Paul says, is honourable in all!—I wish, however, that young brides would not think it an indispensable appendage to their matronly honors to play at whist as soon as they are mistresses of a house of their own. I have always found that they make very

bad partners, in that way at least, for the first year or two; and I do not think my favourite little Fanny's acuteness or solidity such, as to be likely to render her any exception to my general observation."

Catherine was interrupted in reading the rest of her father's domestic chit-chat, by the entrance of Lousia, whose countenance heralded intelligence of a pleasing nature.

"You must come into the drawing-room," said she, "there is a gentleman there, whom you will be glad to see."

Poor Catherine's heart fluttered like a bird frightened from its nest. "Already," thought she, "has he arrived!—how fortunate that we were at home!" Still she asked "Who is it?"

"I shall not tell you," said Louisa, all gaiety, "I will only tell you he saw your father the day before yesterday;"—and away she ran, whilst Catherine staid a moment to recover something like composure.

"Dear Hamilton!" she murmured, in a voice soft and low as the dove's,

'When first her golden couplets are disclosing.'

whilst, with shaking hands, she arranged the tresses he had so often curled round his fingers. "He must have reached Nethercross just after my father wrote!—and to have got back so soon too!—what haste he must have made! how fatigued he must be! and how kind in dear Louisa to seem so happy at the thought of my seeing him once more;—I will never have any concealments with her again—she shall know, from this moment, my every thought!" These reflections brought her to the door—her fingers trembled on the lock—she paused—at length she turned it—entered, and beheld Mr. Dacres! How sickening was the revulsion of her feelings, in a moment.

Mr. Dacres saw her change of countenance, he half smiled as he took her hand.

"I am certain," said he, "Miss Neville is disappointed, perhaps she expected to see her father."

Catherine's eyes filled with tears.

"No," said Louisa, "that I am sure she did not; but it is the thought of your having seen him so lately, that affects her just now;—she is such a home-bird! I am frightened every day, lest she should want to fly back to her nest."

Catherine tried to smile, and made an effort so far to recover herself, as to enter into conversation with Mr. Dacres, for a few minutes; but, on the first pause, she took up the newspaper, as an excuse for silence, and seated herself with it at a distant window.

This was destined to be a day of trial to Catherine. The first paragraph that met her eye, was,—

"'Colonel Hamilton arrived at the Horse Guards, last night, at ten o'clock; and, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, had the honor of being admitted immediately to a pri-

vate audience with His Royal Highness, the Commander in Chief. It is understood that the gallant Colonel is the bearer of despatches of the highest political importance.' "

To know that Hamilton was actually so near her, and yet that he was ignorant of being in the same place with himself, to think that he might, that very day set off on a long and useless journey, solely for the purpose of seeing her; and that he might, by, so doing, leave himself no time to spend with her, before his return to Brussels, was, indeed a severe ordeal to poor Catherine's philosophy.

In her first emotion of surprise, she got up to shew the paragraph to Louisa; but seeing her earnestly engaged in a conversation with Mr. Dacres, which had gradually taken the low tone of deep interest; she sat down again, and turning to the window, she felt her colour come and go every minute, as with straining eyes, she endeavoured to find something of the

air and manner of Hamilton, in every one that came from the opposite side of the Square. Next to Hamilton himself, the individual in the world she most wished to see, just then, was Lord Blakeney, for he would have been sure to have mentioned Hamilton, at any rate; but unfortunately, his Lordship, who generally called six mornings out of seven, chose to make this an exception. Catherine, however, consoled herself with the thought, that he might be with Hamilton; and in that case, he might possibly mention her being at Mr. Longcroft's; at any rate, he would be sure to invite him to Lady Blakeney's ball, that evening; but then, alas! came the recollection, that Hamilton might have left town that morning, without seeing any one; so that, altogether, she found herself bewildered in hopes and fears, suggestions and corrections, chasing each other in her mind; all in phantasmagoric succession, till they all huddled together in one indistinct mass, at the

sound of a loud knock at the front door.—It was Edward Longcroft, who entered.

"I might have known his step," said Catherine, to herself, as she felt the blood rush back into her cheeks. Fortunately for her, Edward did not perceive her agitation, for delighted to see Mr. Dacres, he flew up to him, and shaking him most cordially by the hand, insisted upon it, that he should spend the whole of the day with them.

"You shall not leave us," said Edward, "we were going to Lee and Kennedy's nursery grounds, at Hammersmith, this morning, and it is a fine chance for Louisa, to have you to herborise, and botanise, and floralise with her; you will be very glad to have Mr. Dacres for your companion instead of me; will you not Louisa? and I will pair off with Catherine, and we will ride afterwards to the suspension bridge, and along the winding banks of the river, or over that pretty Barnes' Common,

which is as pretty, and almost as wild as any thing in Craven itself, that is to say, considering it within sight of London."

Louisa coloured, whilst Edward was speaking, and cast her eyes down with an air of embarrassment, foreign to the general elegance of her self-possession.

Mr. Dacres hesitated to accept an invitation unseconded by the fair mistress of the mansion: perhaps, neither she nor he felt quite so certain of Mr. Longcroft's welcome, as Edward seemed to make him himself—on this head, however, they were set at ease by Mr. Longcroft himself, who marched in, at that moment, in high good humour, having just been complimented by a "noble lord," on the zeal and patience he had shewn, the day before in sitting seven hours upon a committee for certain road-bills, by which, or great part of his own property would be nearly doubly in value: he therefore immediately seconded Edward's wishes; and Mr.

Dacres, conquering for once the proud humility which too generally estranged him from the society his birth entitled him to associate with, as freely as his fortunes forbade it, was prevailed upon to accede to their united requests, to accompany the ladies in their morning excursion, and to escort them in the evening, to Lady Blakeney's long-talked of ball.

CHAPTER X.

A PUBLIC MEETING.

Happiness and hope were so congenial to Catherine's disposition, that whenever she was reminded of them by outward similitudes her ardent imagination, and affectionate temperament, never failed to supply her with feelings, that, for the time being, constituted them to her, at any rate, realities.

Thus the splendours of Lady Blakeney's rooms, the lights, the music, the exotics, the

draperies, the devices, the wreaths of laurel, the cyphers, the trophies, alluding to the recent victory, and its results, all awakened her fancy, and heightened her sensibility into that general glow of benevolence which, in participating the happiness, real or imaginary of others, causes individual vexations or griefs to be for the moment forgotten.

"It is delightful to come into public with you Catherine," said Edward Longcroft, who having deputed Mr. Dacres to the care of his cousin, took that of her friend upon himself, "to you every thing is what it seems. You always remind me of those children of nature who take a dramatic representation for a series of actual occurrences, and are amazed with the splendour of the scenery, or absorbed in the interest of the story, whilst others, hacknied in pleasure, and torpid to enjoyment, are displaying their cleverness in vexful criticisms and

their ingenuity in detecting the mechanism. A countenance like yours is enough to give a whole room courage, it tells us so plainly that there is amusement to be had if we can but find it out."

"At any rate," said Catherine, "you cannot accuse any of the people here of idleness in looking for it: are they not in search of it morning, noon, and night, here, and there, and every where?"

"Every where, but the right place," said Edward, "at home and in their own breasts—but!—Catherine!—What is the matter?—you are ill!"—and as he spoke, poor Catherine, paler than monumental marble, gave a deep sigh, and sunk insensible upon his arm.

Edward, exceedingly distressed at her sudden indisposition, looked around for assistance, and became pale as the apparently lifeless form he was supporting, when he beheld, coming up

the room, but stopped on all sides by congratulations, and compliments, Hamilton, in splendid uniform, his orders glittering on his breast; himself, gay and triumphant, with Lady Charlotte Forsyth hanging on his arm, magnificent in her dress, dazzling in her beauty, and exultant in the *éclât* with which she displayed afresh, on so brilliant an occasion, the power of her attractions among men, who at once admired and despised, among women, who hated and envied her!

Alas! for Catherine! that the moment of ecstacy she had so long fondly anticipated, of seeing Hamilton again, should thus unexpectedly be converted into one of anguish, which, taking all her senses by surprise, plunged her into insensibility even to its cause.

By the time Louisa had come to Catherine's assistance, Hamilton also was at her side.

"My Catherine!" he exclaimed, taking her lifeless hand; Edward Longcroft stepped back,

with a look that recalled him to something of self-possession.

"Miss Neville!" he continued, though in a tone that betrayed how much it cost him to assume it, "how little I thought to see her here! may I ask what has caused her illness," he looked appealingly towards Louisa.

"Miss Neville was very well, Sir," she coldly replied, "when she came into the room; it is possible that the heat may have overcome her—she begins to revive, Edward," continued Louisa, turning away from Hamilton,—"pray order the carriage, or perhaps Mr. Dacres will be kind enough to do that; you had better stay here and assist her out of the room."

Hamilton bit his lips—he could not bear to leave her in a state so like death, that he could have wept in the imaginary contemplation of it, yet he dreaded to meet her eyes, amidst so many spectators, when she should again unclose them.—In this predicament the "hero of

Waterloo" stood before Louisa and Edward, like an embarrassed school-boy: at length he took courage to ask if Catherine was visiting in Berkley Square; a cold affirmative drew forth a second interrogatory.

"May I be permitted to enquire after Miss Neville's health, this evening. I shall not stay here more than half-an-hour?"

"I will inform Miss Neville of your wish, Sir, when we arrive at home, if I find her well enough; but I think it very improbable that she will be able to receive you."

Hamilton bit his lips again, and inwardly denounced Louisa as the coldest-hearted piece of prudery he had ever met with.

"But it is always the case," said he to himself, "with your Grecian-nosed beauties, and heads that have no joint in their necks, but must turn round, like the crocodile, with the whole figure at once." And with this inwardly muttered libel on a face and form almost fault-

less, and a formal bow, he returned to Lady Charlotte, whose fine features were clouded over, at his momentary desertion of her; whilst poor Catherine, gradually recovering, from what, at first, appeared to her bewildered recollection only a confused and agitating dream, ventured not even to look around her, anxious only to shun every eye, and to take refuge, as soon as possible, in the silence and solitude of her own apartment.

As soon as ever Hamilton could elude the observation of Lady Charlotte, he hastened to Berkeley Square, to enquire after Catherine; but all the answer he obtained was, that the family physician had been sent for, to Miss Neville, and that both she and Miss Longcroft, had retired to rest. Hamilton, very unwillingly, ordered his carriage back again to Lady Blakeney's.

"This cursed ball," said he to himself, "I wish I had never heard one word about it! If

I had followed my first impulse, and set off to Nethercross, as I ought to have done, this morning, all would have been right. I should have seen my good old friend, at any rate, and I could have settled every thing with him, and have flown back again to Catherine, to receive my sanctioned welcome from her own dear, lovely lips. But my idiot vanity must put it into my head that I ought to show myself, forsooth!—that the public would be disappointed, —the dog and the shadow!—I suppose I shall play the same game to the end of the chapter. Well, confound all second thoughts: let those say they are the best, who find them so. I never had one good for any thing in my life. If I have ever done any thing tolerable it has been when I acted on my first impulse—no calculating, no looking forward, no looking back, all or nothing, no time to cool. And, then, again, what an unlucky rascal I was, to pop upon Lady Charlotte, of all moments in the four-and-

twenty, just when she was sailing into the room in all her tackling—

Brave, ornate, and gay.

No time for calculating then, at any rate, when she seized my arm, in the first burst of surprise and feeling, and was half way in the room before she recollected herself—what could I do? Scipio himself could not have shaken her off."

Hamilton little thought that what he attributed to her Ladyship's feelings, taken by surprise, as he imagined, was entirely a preconcerted manœuvre, on her part. No sooner did she hear of Hamilton's arrival than she determined to resume and publicly exhibit her influence over him. Knowing his intimacy with the Blakeneys, she felt assured that he would be at the ball, to which she was herself invited, but in order to

"Make assurance doubly sure,"

she got her own confidential valet to ascertain the fact from Hamilton's servant, and also the precise moment when his carriage was ordered. By ordering her own a few minutes sooner, and prolonging her stay in the ante-room, under pretence of making some arrangements in her draperies, she contrived to linger till she heard the name of Hamilton announced. Then, indeed, to turn round in affected amazement, to seize his arm as if to ascertain that it was in reality himself, and to enter the room with him, as if forgetting every thing else, in her eager enquiries after his health, and the time he should stay in town, was only the work of a moment; but a moment in its consequences sometimes involves the happiness of a life-time; and scarcely had Hamilton entered the room with her Ladyship, than he felt, as every eye was turned towards him, that he was doing an indecorous, and an unwise thing, in thus reviving the sneers of the ill-natured, and the censures of the good.

But he had little anticipated the effect his appearance with Lady Charlotte was to produce on the only woman in the world whom he really loved; and, imagining her to be two hundred miles off, he thought his senses deceived him, when he saw her, his own devoted Catherine, flit before him, with a thousand new attractions from the elegance of her dress, and the graces of her deportment.

Alas! it was but given him for one short minute to gaze upon her thus: the next their eyes met, and the mingled tenderness, reproach, and grief that he read in hers, in the brief interval ere they closed under the excess of her feelings, instantly made the ball and all its concomitants hateful to him. No wonder that he returned to it reluctantly; nor would he have returned to it at all, had he not dreaded lest any "good-natured friend" should undertake to account for his absence; and as he was equally unwilling that his gravity should be

descanted upon, at a time when a thousand attentions and flatteries required him to appear duly elated by them, he put on a forced gaiety, which had the usual effect of making him despise himself, deceiving the many, whose opinion he cared nothing about, and betraying to the few whose observation he was really desirous to elude, that all was "not right within." Foremost among these keen detecters of any thing counterfeit, was Lady Charlotte Forsyth, who possessed all that instinctive insight into the human heart so often found in the bad, and in them so fatal an instrument in their power of doing evil.

She observed that, when he came into the room, he avoided the party she had joined, during his absence. That moment jealousy took possession of her breast, and calling in pride to its assistance, dictated a revenge secure and lasting, as it seemed to her; the anticipation of which alone enabled her to preserve a

command over her mortification, at his neglect on an occasion when he was himself the chief attraction of the evening, and when she was bent upon shewing every one that she still retained him captive in her chains.

CHAPTER XI.

A MEETING IN PRIVATE.

Much sooner than etiquette would have prescribed, Hamilton presented himself at Mr. Longcroft's door, and requested to see Miss Neville. He was ushered into the drawing-room, and remained there some time alone. Poor Catherine had passed a sleepless night, and made it the pretext for not joining the family at breakfast; but the fact was, that there was

not one at table whose eyes she did not dread to meet, after the betrayal of her feelings the preceding evening: and she, the innocent, the injured, was overcome with "compunctious visitings" of shame and fear, that ought only to be known by guilt. She was dressing when Hamilton's card was brought to her.

"Where is Miss Longcroft?" she asked, gasping for breath.

"Miss Longcroft and Mr. Edward have gone to the Horticultural Gardens, at Turnham Green, with Mr. Dacres, Madam," replied the *Femme de Chambre*, "and Miss Longcroft bid me tell you, that she would not come to you, before she went out, because, as you had such a bad night, she thought it possible you might be asleep."

"She is always considerate and kind," said Catherine, feeling, however, somewhat relieved that she was just then out of the way.

Catherine had resolved, as she was coming

down stairs, to receive Hamilton with that dignified reserve which should shew him that she had conquered the weakness she had been surprised into, by so unexpectedly seeing him, and was prepared to judge him with the impartiality which she felt to be due to her own sincerity. But when she opened the door, and beheld again his fine martial figure;—when he started from the thoughtful attitude in which he was leaning against the mantle-piece, his elbow resting on it, and his hand shadowing his eyes, —when starting from his reverie at her entrance, he flew forward to meet her, with an air of empressment, chastened by deference; and with a deprecation of her displeasure, as new as it was graceful in him. Oh, she saw in him only her lover, and her hero! and whilst giving way to the unsophisticated tenderness of her nature, she wept upon the bosom to which he pressed her, in all the manly warmth of gratified fondness. Anger, jealousy, pride;—every painful feeling

was forgotten; she remembered only that she loved,—she felt only that she was beloved. Hamilton was charmed with the sweet contest of every emotion, most lovely in the female heart, which he so easily read in her eloquent countenance, and which all terminated in such fond forgiveness and generous confidence.

"Yes," he internally exclaimed, "she shall be the wife of my bosom, the mother of my children!—she shall know my every thought and share my every feeling." And whilst he thus gave way to his own natural generosity, he gazed with all the pride of anticipated possession, upon her, as her cheek mantled with the richest vermilion, and her eyes beamed with softer brilliancy through the tears that glistened on their lashes, like dew-drops gemming the stalk of a moss-rose. Easily susceptible of refinement, Catherine had, unconsciously to herself, acquired an air of dignity and fashion in the society with which she had been surrounded

ever since her arrival in town, which delighted Hamilton, and which added to the pomp of Mr. Longcroft's establishment, the obstacles opposed by etiquette to his frequently seeing her, and even the marked discouragement which both Louisa and Edward manifested of his proffered visit, all gave her new consequence in his eyes; and instead of fancying, as he did in his unrivalled self-importance at Nethercross, that he was doing her the honour in permitting himself to be attracted by her charms, he now felt himself the real admirer of her graces, the lover of her virtues, and consequently with the jealousy inseparable from such feelings, anxious to secure her to himself.

"Let us not be separated again, my sweet Catherine!" he exclaimed, as he dropped on his knee before her, with a grace which a knight in the proudest days of chivalry might have envied. "I will write to your father this evening, for his consent to our marriage, and

then I can take you back to Brussels with me, and all the assembled powers at the Congress of Vienna shall see my chosen one, my bride, the fairest among the fair! and what a glorious year, my Catherine, for the commencement of our happiness, what an epoch for recollection," but he in vain sought in Catherine's heightened blushes, and averted eyes for consent to this proposal, so sudden that it alarmed alike her delicacy and her filial affection.

"Oh, no!" she uttered in a low and hurried tone, "You must not write to my dear father—it is for me alone to reconcile him to the idea of parting with me.—I will return home directly and stay there till you come back from Brussels; too short will the time be for me to remain with him.—No hand but his shall give me to another, and my wedded happiness shall begin in the dear domestic haunts, where I first learned to love beyond their peaceful bounds."

Poor Catherine's heart swelled as she spoke,

with every passionate and tender feeling; and her concluding words were lost in sobs.

Hamilton soothed her with the fondest caresses, and luxuriated in the delight, which he then, for the first time in his life, experienced, of having a lovely, sentient being to encourage, to protect, to shield from ill, to make happy.

"It shall be as you wish, my beloved Catherine," said he, rising from his lover-like position, and resuming his seat beside her, that he might not distress her by any further display of his impetuosity. "I will ascertain, to-day, how long my absence from Brussels may continue, or how soon, should I be forced to go back immediately, I may obtain leave to return: but then, my Catherine, you must ask no more delays—remember, a soldier's time is precious, and not his own. Our troops are now at the gates of Paris—it is the hour of triumph, and my beloved must share it with me. But your dear father shall unite us. I could scarcely

hope for happiness without his blessing—and it will indeed be sweet to receive my dear treasure at Nethercross, that sweet secluded spot where I first discovered it. Yes, it will be a blessed thing to stand before that humble altar to receive my Catherine's hand, and the swallows will fly in and out, as they do in sermon time; and your kind-hearted father will find out some pretty classical omen of good fortune for us in their chirpings—and then," he continued, seeing Catherine's smiles contending with her tears, like sun-beams in a shower, "I suppose *my Sister Amelia* will stand at your side, and *my Brother Henry* at mine; and then too I shall have my little nephew and niece to call me uncle, as soon as we come out of church. So I shall be instaled at once into the honors of a family man."

His remaining anticipations were interrupted by a loud rap at the door; and Catherine, starting up in nervous apprehension, betrayed in her

looks, her unwillingness to be found alone with him.

"I see I have your leave of absence," said Hamilton, rising also, with a slight air of mortification, "and pray when may I be permitted to see you again?"

"I cannot say," replied Catherine, in a tone almost of dejection, "you know I am not at home—I wish I was."

"I shall take the liberty, however," said Hamilton, with a return of his characteristic haughtiness, "of considering this your home, whilst you honor it by making it such; and, therefore, I shall, unless expressly forbidden by you, presume to present myself before you to-morrow, in the hope of being as happy as I have been to-day, and at the same hour if convenient to you."

He spoke like a man unaccustomed to contradiction, and Catherine was too much confused and fluttered either to put a negative upon

his request, or to evade the parting embrace with which it was enforced. Nevertheless she felt a source of relief, when she heard the Hall door close after him, before any one came in; and after following him with her eyes, till he was out of sight, she flew to her own room, in an indescribable flutter of delight, to indulge in the retrospections which are the only sure and inalienable treasures of even the happiest love, for the past admits not of change.

CHAPTER XII.

AN OVERCAST.

When Catherine went to dinner, she immediately perceived that a most portentous cloud hung over the family party. Mr. Longcroft was as solemn as if he had been called upon to give a casting vote upon the Reform Bill, and as severe as if he was empowered to pass sentence upon a whig libellist.

Edward was pale as ashes, and sent away

untasted, one plate after another, whenever he could elude the moody glances which his uncle from time to time threw at him; whilst Louisa strove, with timid affection, to cheer him by her quiet attentions, even though her own countenance and voice betrayed that she was suffering under agitation equal to his own.

Catherine might indeed have exclaimed—

"How awful is this gloom,"

she quaked inwardly in the fear that she might in some sort be connected with it, though she knew not how; and she could scarcely have borne with the uncomfortable nature of her feelings, had it not been for the talismanic recollection of Hamilton and his endearing love. Alas! she was not long to preserve the charm unsullied. Mr. Longcroft, after a formal enquiry after her health, said—

"I find Colonel Hamilton's name in the

Porter's book, this morning: I presume his visit was to you, Miss Neville."

Catherine bowed her head, the affirmative monosyllable she had not courage to utter.

"I am aware," continued Mr. Longcroft, "that there are ties of long standing between Mr. Neville, and Colonel Hamilton. A visit of ceremony, therefore, from the Colonel to Mr. Neville's daughter might be expected, and indeed, could scarcely be avoided on his part.—But you will excuse me, I trust, Miss Neville, if I say that I hope his visit is not likely to be repeated."

Catherine bowed her head again, and bent her crimsoned cheek over a glass of water to hide its heightened hue.

"I have a certain degree of respect for Colonel Hamilton," Mr. Longcroft went on, "he is nephew to the Earl of Winterton, and will come in, most likely, for his title and estates; the Earl being ten years my senior and

unmarried: and the Colonel is himself a man of influence, and might be a great acquisition to any side he chose to join. But he has committed himself in his behaviour with Lady Charlotte Forsyth; and though that was overlooked, in consequence of an honorable explanation with Sir William, yet his making his appearance at the ball last night, with her Ladyship, was universally condemned. And the circumstance of her Ladyship's having, I regret to say, left Sir William's house this very morning, and taken up her abode at Nerot's Hotel, to the great injury of her character, at any rate, and in contempt of all the established usages of society, calls upon every one who is interested in its legitimate rules, to withhold, at least for the present, any countenance of the person implicated in so flagrant a breach of them."

Happily for Catherine, her indignation, at what she felt to be the injustice of this charge

against Hamilton, surmounted every other uneasy consideration it might have awakened: and gave her courage to rebut a calumny which she was proud to know was unfounded. She therefore replied with the greatest firmness, that Colonel Hamilton had been with her all the morning, and that she was very certain he was utterly incapable of dissimulation, which must indeed be a new feature in his character, if he could have expressed himself as he had done, with respect to Lady Charlotte and Sir William in the course of his conversation with her, had he had the slightest knowledge of her Ladyship's proceedings, or been in any way accessary to them.

"Ah, Miss Neville," said Mr. Longcroft, shaking his head incredulously, "you are young; you know very little of the world, and nothing of the great world: it is not to be expected."

"Nor desired," thought Catherine, indig-

nantly: and Louisa, pitying her flushed cheek, and quivering lip, rose, and they retired to the drawing-room. Catherine's courage lasted no longer than the shutting of the door, she then threw herself into Louisa's arms and wept.—When she had somewhat relieved the fulness of her heart, "Louisa," said she, "I must be thinking of returning home—my visit to you has been twice as long as I at first calculated upon, and my dear father, I am sure, wants me back again.—When does Mr. Dacres leave town? he would perhaps be kind enough to take care of me, and my father would be quite comfortable under the idea of my having his protection on the road."

Louisa was surprised and grieved at this sudden determination of Catherine's, "I thought," said she, "my dear Catherine, you would have staid with me till the end of the season; and then we could have returned into Yorkshire together.—Pray do not leave me now,

I have need of your society more than you imagine;" and her voice faltered as she spoke, "but I fear," she continued, recovering herself, "you are in some measure offended with what my father said about Colonel Hamilton; nay, my dear Catherine, do not turn your face away or I shall fancy you are angry with me too,—but surely you must, upon reflection, think my father was right."

"Not in this instance," said Catherine, impatiently, "I know that with respect to his imagining Colonel Hamilton in any degree instrumental to Lady Charlotte Forsyth's leaving her own house, he is positively wrong.—Yes, you may smile, Louisa; you think, of course, that because I am not acquainted with fashionable people, or fashionable habits, I know nothing, but of Colonel Hamilton's sentiments and principles I do know something; and I am certain he would not deceive me; he is too open, too honorable—deceit or concealment are not

among his faults, whatever others he may have."

Louisa did not smile again; no, she felt more inclined to weep, when she saw Catherine's agitation.

"Ah, Catherine," she said, "no woman who has been brought up in virtuous seclusion can know the deceits or concealments which men think it no dishonor to practise upon our sex. But I fear you are attached to Colonel Hamilton—do not look angry with me for saying so; I fear it, because I think you would not find in him that fixedness of mind, and that high tone of feeling which I should desire in the man that my dear Catherine might select as the sole and lasting object of her regard. Ah, Catherine! it has been too truly said, that love is a mere episode in the life of a man of the world, or rather a string of episodes. But with our sex, at any rate with the most amiable of them, the sole object of their existence, their beings, end

and aim. When I recollect how many I have seen, even among my own acquaintance, who have sacrificed all their earthly happiness, either in giving themselves in marriage to some person undeserving of them, or pining under the defection of some worthless object, I cannot refrain from warning you, my dear Catherine, not to embark rashly on an ocean wherein all your amiable qualities, and all your peace of mind may be wrecked."

"But Colonel Hamilton is not worthless," replied Catherine, with a conscious pride in the dear object of her love, that supported her in the attack upon him, which from any other but Louisa she would have keenly resented, "you do not know him as I do, my dear Louisa, nor have you had the opportunity of seeing any of the amiable qualities which he every day brought out, in his long domestication with us."

"Certainly I do not say that Colonel Hamilton is worthless, nor do I think it. I cannot

think it of a man that was your father's pupil, and is honored with your father's friendship.— But I must own I think his worth is very much mixed up with baser metal; neither do I think that his amiable qualities, for I do not mean to deny his possessing them, attractive ones I know he has, are exactly of the kind which would make you happy, or which your dear, good father would require, as indispensable, in his son-in-law. No, Catherine, you ought to meet with an amiable, equal disposition, a cultivated mind, with somewhat of a thoughtful turn; fond of retirement, yet capable of entering with ardour into public life, if called upon; a man that you would have the gratification of seeing respected by others, as much as beloved by yourself."

"Ah, Louisa," interrupted Catherine, "it is easy for you to describe what would be desirable for me, when you have only to look at your own lot, and draw from it; happy in an en-

gagement with the object of your choice, secure of his long-tried affection, you see him sanctioned by your father, admired by the world, you have the delight of being able to enrich him with your wealth, as well as to make him happy in giving him your hand;—you have neither doubts, nor fears, nor cares, nor mortifications to contend with,—you have only—"

"I! Catherine!" exclaimed Louisa, whose agitation had gradually increased, as she listened to this account of her own happiness in possession and *futuro*. "I! happy in an engagement with the object of my choice, in having neither doubts nor fears! nor cares, nor mortifications!—Ah Catherine, you little know what I have to contend with! how much I have to suffer!"—and as she spoke she cast her eyes upwards, with a look of anguish, and then, covering her face in the cushion of the sofa, she wept for some minutes, with a degree of abandonment so utterly foreign to her usual placid-

ity, that Catherine looked at her with equal surprise and concern.

"My dear Louisa!" she exclaimed.

"My dear Louisa!" echoed Edward Longcroft, who that moment entered, and seeing her in tears, threw his arms affectionately round her, "my sweet Louisa, what is the matter! has any thing new occurred?"

"No," said Louisa, attempting to smile through her tears, "I am childish, that is all; and you must not ask me any questions."

Edward, however, did not seem satisfied with this negative explanation; and Catherine left the room, in order that her presence might not be any obstacle to a more detailed one, should Louisa choose to give it.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SECRET.

The next morning Mr. Longcroft's solemnity seemed to be encreased; Edward Longcroft had gone out early with Mr. Dacres, and breakfast was taken in almost total silence. Mr. Longcroft's head was full of great designs; the idea of the brilliant *fêtes* which promised a long perspective of *éclât* through the remainder of the season of bridal presentations at court, amidst the admiring gaze of foreign potentates, and

the envy of the most fashionable home circles, all made him determine no longer to delay the long projected marriage of his daughter with his nephew. Accordingly, as soon as breakfast was over, he summoned Louisa to accompanyhim into the library;—arrived there, he shut the door—handed her a chair—drew down the blind—placed his pen, ink and paper before him, from habit, and then proceeded with, proper diplomatic gravity of countenance, to inform her that he intended her marriage with her cousin to take place as soon as the requisite preparations could be made; that he had ordered the carriage to take them to Hamlet's, in order that she might give directions respecting her wedding jewels, after which they would drive to Park-Lane, to see a magnificent mansion, which was to be disposed of, and which he intended to purchase for her, in case it should meet with her approbation. Louisa listened to her father with eyes rivetted upon the

table, and her cheek varying from red to white; and, as she made no reply to his proposals, he impatiently asked her why she did not speak. The blood rushed back into her cheeks—her father watched the changes in her countenance with an angry eye.

"You take me by surprise, Sir," said she, at last, "I am not prepared to speak on such a subject."

"Take you by surprise!" repeated Mr. Longcroft, disdainfully. "What, after an engagement of seven years standing, are you surprised that I should talk to you of your wedding-day?—This savors somewhat more of affectation, Louisa, than I expected from you."

"It is not affectation, Sir," said Louisa, with dignity, "but surely I may be allowed to express something like surprise, at hearing you talk of fixing the day for my marriage, when I have never, myself, been either solicited or consulted about it."

"Oh, then," said Mr. Longcroft, "you are offended, it should seem, with your cousin for not showing more of a lover's impatience."

Louisa colored again, and rose almost angrily from her seat, but recollecting herself she resumed it, and Mr. Longcroft continued in a more conciliating tone.—

"You know very well, Louisa, that Edward Longcroft is peculiarly situated in this matter. He is, in fact, solely the obliged party: he is a young man of delicate, as well as of honorable feelings. And it is a delicate matter for him to press a match by which he will eventually come into all my landed property, and have the honor of representing, as it were, myself. It certainly would not become him, who has not a shilling in the world, except what I give him, and no claim upon me whatever, excepting, indeed, the circumstance of his being my brother's son, it certainly would not become him, I say, to act the independent suitor, and

press you to bestow your hand upon him, of his own accord, as if he had a regular establishment to take you to, and could offer suitable settlements, and pin-money, and so forth.—No, it is quite another thing as matters stand—and I bore that in mind, yesterday, when I had a little talk with him on the subject, and remarked his reluctance."

"Oh, Sir," Louisa exclaimed.

"That is, I mean, his becoming diffidence, I should have said, and I must say, that I think all the better of him for it. But then, Louisa, you, on the other hand, should not mortify him by any misplaced reserve, it would indeed be quite ridiculous, situated as you are with him; it is not as if you were going to marry an entire stranger, as many girls of quality do—on a three week's acquaintance—introduced the first at a ball, contracted the next, and married the week

after.—Edward and you, on the contrary, are like brother and sister."——

"We are indeed!" said Louisa, "cousins are always like brother and sister!"—And she clasped her hands together, with an expression of so much mental agony, that her father, utterly unused to see the fine serenity of her countenance ruffled, even for a moment, knit his brows, and looked as if he would have enquired into her inmost soul.—

"Louisa," said he, "let me have no romance; it is vulgar, and it is hateful in my sight.—You have every thing to make you rationally happy.—You have all the luxuries of life in possession, and a large fortune in reversion, —you have a fine person, and plenty of talent to lead in society,—you have the affections, the entire affections, I may safely say, of a most excellent young man, who, with my aid, will, I doubt not, one day, possess great influence in Parli-

ament, you have the power of gratifying every wish, and of inspiring hundreds with envy,—what more would you desire?"

A knock and ring, announcing the bridegroom elect, put an end to this climax of felicities. Louisa hastily rose, to avoid meeting his eyes in the presence of her father, and Mr. Longcroft allowed her to make her escape, in order that he might, without restraint, announce his positive determination to Edward also, hoping that they would be received with somewhat more of gratitude and alacrity than he had manifested the day before, at having them hinted to him, for his consideration.—Louisa could not pass her cousin so quickly, but that he saw how much she was agitated, he caught her hand,—

"Louisa!" he exclaimed,—but she made a sign of silence, pointing to the door, and in a voice scarcely reaching to a whisper, said,—

"Now Edward, be firm, and save us both."

All this time Catherine was in the drawing-room, wondering at Louisa's lengthened absence, and dreading, as the hour approached, when Hamilton had appointed to call, lest he should make his appearance; yet still more distressed at the thought of the mortification and displeasure he would feel, if he found that Mr. Longcroft had given orders for him not to be admitted. Suddenly, however, all other considerations were lost in amazement, when the door opened, and in rushed not Louisa, not Hamilton, but Edward Longcroft, flushed with anger, and trembling with emotion.—

"Catherine," said he, "I am going to leave my uncle's house, most likely never more to enter it. Let me have the consolation, before I depart, of thinking that you wish me well—oh, Catherine!"——He paused, he pressed his hands upon his chest, for he felt suffocated, and all his firmness melting into woman's weakness—he knelt before her and wept. Ca-

therine astonished and shocked at his agitation, strove to soothe him with every tenderness:—

"Dear Edward," she said, "compose yourself, for Louisa's sake, think what she will feel if she sees you thus."

"Dear Edward!" exclaimed he, "oh, Catherine, if I were really dear to you! could I even hope to be so, at any future period, however distant, how rejoicingly would I go forth on the wide world, which I am already cast upon, friendless! but I have not even hope," and his cheek grew pale as he spoke, "nor have I the consolation of thinking that you at least may be happy," his brow contracted—he paused—but after a moment's struggle he proceeded,—"oh, Catherine! guard those fine feelings, that pure heart! let me not have the added misery of thinking that they are withheld, where they would have been garnered up, treasures more precious than life, to be bestowed unworthily." But seeing a glow on Catherine's cheek, which

he attributed to displeasure, he rose hastily, —"Farewell!" said he, "I will not offend you! farewell! dear, dear Catherine!"—and he wrung her hand so fervently, as he uttered the words, that she felt the anguished appeal.—Like him she loved—like him she might be destined to love in vain,—and she seemed, at that moment, joined with him in strange sympathy, against herself.

"I cannot say farewell so suddenly," said she, melting into tears, "it seems a dream that you are going; I cannot bear to think that we are really about to part—and Louisa!—surely you will see her before you leave the house—how dreadfully she will feel this change!"

"Dear Louisa!" exclaimed Edward, "every blessing attend her! sweet, gentle and disinterested as she is! but to see her now, would only distress us both.—No, Catherine! all my thoughts, at this moment, are absorbed in one alone! Farewell, again farewell! I must go,

—I would not that my uncle should tell me a second time to quit his house. God bless you!" And with this benediction, breathed in a bursting sigh, he left the room.

Catherine listened to his hurried and receding steps, she heard the hall-door opened, and closed again immediately after; and, overcome by a variety of contending feelings, she hastened to her own room, and remained there all the rest of the morning, without a single interruption to her perplexed and painful train of thought.

CHAPTER XIV.

MALHEURS D'UN JOLI GARÇON.

Hamilton, meanwhile, was in a situation not less perplexing, and far more painful, inasmuch as he felt that he had only himself originally to blame for it. On his return home from his visit in Berkley Square, full of the delightful feelings of genuine attachment, which it had confirmed in his bosom, he found a note upon his table: his forehead flushed as he took

it up, for too well did he know the rose-coloured paper, breathing

"Nard and cassia's balmy smells,"

the mysterious cameo, that sealed it. But those refinements of coquettry, which it had before pleased his vanity to be the object of, now appeared to him only in their true light, as meretricious allurements, which real love thinks not of having recourse to—nay, would shrink from making use of, as lifting up that beautiful veil of reserve which, when casually drawn aside, by the hallowed hand of affection, shews glimpses of heaven to the imagination, which loves to dwell on every shadowy outline.

There is no surer guard against the allurements of vice than the delightful enthralment of a tender and honorable attachment. Hamilton felt this, but alas! he was unhappily entangled in the snares of a woman whose heart had never warmed to any feeling more power-

ful than that of vanity, whose head was incapable of any thing more elevated than the superficial acquirements necessary to gain the admiration which, under whatever form it might be manifested, constituted the chief good and sole object of her mischievous existence. Hamilton, even whilst he was himself under the influence of no feelings more creditable, had begun to discover this to be the character of the lady whose note he then held in his hand; reluctant to break the seal, and now that he had the full force of contrast, both in the object and nature of his tender sentiments, his perceptions were proportionably quickened to all that was amiss in her—but he was not prepared for the mortification that awaited him, when, on opening the note, he found that Lady Charlotte Forsyth had too surely left her husband's house, and gone to Nerot's hotel, where she conjured him instantly to go to her, "to advise with her," as she choose to express it, "upon the steps most proper for

her to take, in her unhappy situation," as she pathetically termed it.

She spoke of Sir William's jealousy, of the cruel reproaches he had made her, of the utter impossibility of being able to live in the same house with him, after what had passed on her return from the ball. But she forgot to add, that what she termed jealousy, others might have considered nothing but a mild remonstrance from Sir William, on the impropriety of her continuing to receive the attentions of Colonel Hamilton in public: for

'Alas! good easy man!'

that she should have been the first to seek them, to insist upon them, and to contrive to appropriate them peculiarly to herself, it never entered his head for one moment to imagine:— he therefore spoke to her in the language of an affectionate brother, jealous of, yet nothing doubting the honor of a beloved sister, than of

a husband already aggrieved by his wife's levity, and who had a right to demand that she should no second time compromise his character and her own, by, to say the least of it, the thoughtless vanity of her conduct. But to a spirit like Lady Charlotte's any remonstrance, however kindly couched, was an injury, any argument, however rational and dispassionate, an insult.

The unfeeling insolence of her replies, the impertinence of her sarcasms, at length roused even the mild, forgiving temper of Sir William into resentment; and he informed her, with the determined air which generally accompanies resolutions that are slow in forming, that, if she meant to continue under the same roof with himself, and share the privileges of his rank and fortune; it must be on the condition of her making a solemn promise to renounce all acquaintance with Colonel Hamilton for the future.

"Your rank is inferior to my own," was her Ladyship's reply; "your fortune my marriage

articles will enable me to do without, and the privilege of sharing either of them with a companion like yourself, I have quite philosophy enough to relinquish, as soon as you please."

"You will never find another, however, Charlotte," said Sir William, with a suppressed sigh, as he looked upon her, towering like Juno, in the pride of her beauty, "more indulgent to your faults, more ready to admire your attractions, sincerely and tenderly."

Lady Charlotte's heart smote her for a moment, as her husband's undeviating kindness to her, ever since their marriage, rushed upon her recollection; but the evil one was busy within her, and so fatally did she allow herself to be carried away by every suggestion, that she ought to have repelled, that, instead of soothing Sir William's ruffled feelings, by concession, or seeking for repose to her own, she changed her ball attire for a morning dress, gave orders to her *Femme de Chambre*, and valet, both deep in

her secret councils, to make the requisite preparations for her departure; and as soon as the day was sufficiently advanced, left her *home*,—that word that comprises all that is valuable to woman, and took up her abode at Nerot's Hotel, whence, ten minutes after her arrival, she despatched the note to Hamilton; which, ere he had finished it, he crushed in his hand, and tore into a thousand fragments, before he recollected himself.

"What folly! what madness!" he exclaimed, "what a headstrong fury she is, when she sets her mind upon any thing.—If she was not so handsome, she would be intolerable;—but what am I to do? I am bewildered,—I suppose I must go to her—and yet I hate the appearance of it to Sir William, after every thing has been honourably settled between him and me."

Hamilton here gulped down some recollections that stuck in his throat like a bullet "And if poor dear Catherine gets to hear of it, what

will she think of me—but Lady Charlotte will never rest till she does see me;—that is certain. Well then, it will be better to go directly, before the matter gets talked of, and see if I can persuade her to go back to her own house.—Confound the balls, and the women, and all fashion, and all nonsense. I almost wish I had had my foolish head," (looking at himself in the glass, as he spoke) "shot off, in the field of Waterloo—it might have been boxed up quietly with Lord Paget's leg, and would not have been half so much missed."

While Hamilton thus soliloquised, he made his toilette afresh, with even more than his usual care; and when it was completed, set off, by back streets, and bye passages, to present himself before the lady, his acquaintance with whom exactly illustrated the definition given by Stendhal, of fashionable conversation, "the armed commerce of two vanities."

CHAPTER XV.

SPLENDID MISERY.

O WHAT joyless meals may be served on plate! The glittering side-board, the liveried servants, the variety of dishes only made the silence at Mr. Longcroft's table the more remarkable. It was indeed the contrast of outward luxury with inward discontent. Louisa, trembling in the dread of meeting her father's eye, durst not lift her own from her plate, when

the splendid silver soup tureen, which had sheltered her from his observation, was removed from the centre. Catherine missed Edward's serene and intelligent countenance opposite to her, and could scarcely refrain from tears, as she recalled its altered expression in the moment of his bidding her farewell.

But, the dejection of either Catherine or Louisa, was only faintly visible, in comparison with the rage and disappointment sternly mingled together in Mr. Longcroft's features, whilst, with an air which he meant to be perfectly composed, he promulgated a variety of common-place remarks, in a tone of voice, however, which sufficiently betrayed him to be in no humour for any difference of opinion; and no sooner had the servants withdrawn than even the attempt to keep up appearances was laid aside.

Silence, awful and portentous silence reigned absolute, and Catherine, for the first time in

her life, experienced the mortifying and embarrassing sensation of being in the way. Oh, how did her thoughts and wishes turn then to the dear home, where she was the delight of all around her! Yes! days of amusement and gaiety may pass fleetly enough among strangers, but, on the first cloud in the horizon of pleasure, how naturally does the young heart look back upon its parent nest, and long for the shelter of the fostering boughs, among which its first flights have been tried, its first notes warbled! Louisa understood Catherine's appealing looks: she rose, and Catherine gladly hailed the signal of release: but Louisa was not to escape so easily.

"Miss Longcroft," said her father, "I wish to have some conversation with you, if you are not particularly engaged—we need not detain you Miss Neville. I am afraid you have found our family party tedious enough already," and as he spoke he rose to open the door for her,

avec toute la politesse de la vielle cour, though he could not help knitting his brows as he did it, with somewhat between a frown and a sneer, which made poor Catherine's heart sink within her.

"I will go home," said she to herself, "whatever I may be doomed to suffer shall be suffered at Nethercross, within my own loved, paternal walls, and not among strangers."

Then came thoughts of Hamilton, to divide alike her wishes and her resolutions. He had not called—he had not written—he might possibly have called, during the morning, and been denied admittance;—but then he would have written. He might be displeased with her if he could imagine her so unmindful of his appointment, as actually to be "not at home," when he presented himself—or he might be indignant, if he believed the answer given in compliance with Mr. Longcroft's orders. Still he would have written, or could have written, or might have

written, or should have written—and Catherine wept solitary and forlorn, in a magnificent drawing-room, furnished with every thing to charm the senses and delight the imagination.

Louisa, meanwhile, was not more happy, or less anxious than her friend, for she was trembling under the searching eye of her father, who, for the first time in his life, addressed her with severity, because, for the first time in his life, he suspected in her somewhat of opposition to his wishes.

"Miss Longcroft," said he, "you may make yourself perfectly easy with respect to your marriage with your cousin—that is to say with Mr. Edward Longcroft. You will never hear his name mentioned again by me, as long as I live. He has insulted me—he has dared to oppose my wishes—to talk of plans and inclinations of his own. I do not mean to complain of his ingratitude—it will bring its own punishment—or to descant on his folly; he will

find it out in time. No, I do not mean to waste one word in talking of him, or one thought in thinking of him. It is you, alone, now, Louisa, you, doubly my only child," and here Mr. Longcroft's voice faltered in spite of himself, and he helped out the sentence with a large glass of claret, "in whom all my estates must centre, though the name," and here, though a man of the strictest temperance, he again filled his glass, "may, nay must, change. It is with you alone, Louisa, that I have now to advise and settle. I wish to see you married, my dear child—nay, do not interrupt me—I know that you wish to say you are happy as you are, and so I hope and trust you are—but I wish to see you more so; that is, I wish to see you invested with the consequence of an establishment of your own. All women ought to marry—particularly women of rank and fortune; it keeps up the aristocracy; and in the match I have to propose to you, I think you will have

every reason to be satisfied with the position it will give you in society."

"Propose to me, Sir!" exclaimed Louisa, in equal amazement and dismay, "surely it is impossible you can have any match in view for me to-day, when my cousin Edward only left us yesterday."

"And what difference can that make to you?" asked Mr. Longcroft sternly; "you will be so obliging as to recollect that it was only yesterday, that you seemed quite overpowered at the idea of your marriage with your cousin even being in contemplation; forgetting, however, that for five years you had allowed me and every body else to consider him as your accepted and betrothed lover: and now you pretend to make his rejection of you, I beg pardon, Miss Longcroft, for using an expression of which I, at any rate, feel all the humiliation, his declining my proposals, I will call his insolent obstinacy, an excuse for not listening to

any other more advantageous offer. For, after all, you would have gained nothing with him, you will bear in mind; no title, no increase of consequence."

"Nor should I have wished it," said Louisa, with great emotion. "My own possessions, through your liberality, my dear father, will always be enough for my utmost ambition;—and all I pray for is, that I may, at some future period, have the happiness to make a choice that you may approve; or that you will have the kindness to suffer me, at present, to remain as I am, and to devote all my cares to your comfort."

"But you may now choose one whom I shall be sure to approve, and who, I presume, you will not think it necessary to reject merely because he is an Earl, and has thirty thousand a year, clear of all incumbrances.—But what is the matter, Louisa, why do you look so bewildered, and so overcome?—Perhaps I have been

too sudden in this disclosure;—but you are a young woman of sense and firmness, so tell me, at once, Louisa, what answer shall I give Lord Blakeney; for, I suppose, you guess pretty well that he is the person I mean."

"No, indeed, Sir," said Louisa, recovering herself; "I neither guessed nor thought of any one—and as to Lord Blakeney, if I gave him the answer I wished, it would be, that so far from being flattered by his proposals, I think he takes a more unfeeling and unwarrantable liberty, in making them so immediately upon my cousin's departure; nor can I conceive how he, even gossip as he is, could have got to know so immediately of any alteration in those arrangements, which you say, Sir, the world has been so kind as to take for granted, during the last five years."

"Upon my word, Miss Longcroft," said her father, with a forced command over his increasing wrath, "you have the most extraordinary

notions, for a young woman of your pretensions and prospects, I ever met with—one would actually imagine you wanted to be courted like a milk-maid, or a milliner's apprentice; but however, I had rather you should blame your father than his lordship, if you must, in your wisdom, blame some one; and therefore, I shall condescend to inform you that Lord Blakeney made proposals to me, for your hand, some months ago, by which I felt very much honoured; though I rejected them at that time, on account of my partiality for your ungrateful, insolent cousin; and my desire for my family estates to be transmitted to the name of Longcroft. But as soon as he choose himself to frustrate all the plans I had formed for his aggrandisement,—a seat in parliament, his own darling wish, among them; I begged leave to open the negociation again, and I am happy to say, that I found his lordship fully as willing as myself, to renew it; so that if we can get the lawyers into

good humour enough to work hard, I may have the pleasure of seeing my daughter presented, as the Countess of Blakeney, at the next drawing-room, which will be the most splendid since the Regency."

"You renewed the negociation, Sir," said Louisa, with a feeling of vexation, which could not for an instant be chased by the glorious vision of being raised to the peerage, and presented, amidst all the "princes, potentates, and powers," whose visits were already impatiently anticipated in the great world. "You were very wrong, Sir, you must excuse my liberty of saying so; to do any thing of the sort, without being kind enough to tell me of your intention—for I am afraid it will only prove a mortification to Lord Blakeney, and a disappointment to you; if indeed you have set your heart upon making him your son-in-law."

"Set my heart upon it, most undoubtedly I

have," said Mr. Longcroft, turning all the colours in the rainbow. "I would be glad to know who would not in my place;—and I must request that you will set your heart upon it too, if your heart be still as I presume it is,—at your own disposal."

Louisa turned as pale as ashes, and fell back in her chair, nearly fainting—her father was shocked at her emotion; and getting up to give her a glass of water, took her hand in his, and said—

"Come my dear Louisa—I did not mean to distress you—take courage and tell me if your affection for your cousin any way interferes with the desire, I am sure you would otherwise feel, to gratify me by accepting Lord Blakeney's most undeniable offer—if it does, I will not thwart your inclinations—indeed it would not be just to do so, because I feel I have done all I could to encourage them—therefore you have only to speak the word, and I will recall

Edward, give him another chance of repairing his error, and availing himself of the good fortune my generosity and your partiality hold out to him—and then after all, Longcroft Hall will go in the right line, and keep up the old name."

"No, Sir," said Louisa, trying to rally her fortitude for a final explanation, both with respect to Edward, and to Lord Blakeney; "you must not do so,—I cannot marry Edward."

"Not marry Edward?—cannot marry Edward Longcroft,—and pray why not? can you marry neither one nor the other,—and pray what are your objections to your cousin?"

"That he *is* my cousin, Sir," replied Louisa, firmly; "that all the years we have been on terms of the most unreserved intimacy, we have neither of us felt more for each other, than the affectionate friendship which I hope nothing will ever impair between us; and that the circumstance of my being four years older than

himself, has added to, and confirmed the nature of his feelings towards me, which are those of a brother for an elder and indulgent sister; and nothing beyond!"

Mr. Longcroft looked as amazed, at this explicit avowal, as if he had seen the Prime Minister go over to the opposition benches.

"Louisa," he said, "if I could bring myself to think, that my disappointment with respect to your marriage with your cousin originated solely with yourself, I could find in my heart to recall him, and banish you from my sight;—but there seems some league betwixt you—I can not make it out—it baffles my sagacity, and I believe I have as much as most men;—will you however condescend to inform me, now that you have favored me with your ostensible reasons why you will not marry Mr. Edward Longcroft, —what occasions your reluctance to listen to Lord Blakeney."

"The difference of our habits, and modes of

thinking Sir; I must hope to find in the man I accept as my husband a friend to whose intellectual powers I can look up with reverence, and whose pursuits and religious principles are congenial to my own."

"Really Louisa, you have less sense than I thought you had—Lord Blakeney's intellectual powers are fully sufficient to keep up his rank with becoming dignity; he can make a very good speech, and always knows on which side of a question he ought to vote; and as for his pursuits, he does not game, and does nothing unlike a gentleman—but I suppose you would have him read Greek and Latin, like a pedagogue;—indeed, Louisa, with your notions you ought to marry a village schoolmaster."

Louisa's face was suffused with crimson—"I must marry a man whom I can esteem and prefer above all the world, Sir," she replied, "if ever I marry at all; for neither my notions of religion, or of delicacy, will allow me to join

my fate in this world and the next with any other."

"Well, we will attend to this world first," said Mr. Longcroft, somewhat contemptuously, "so I suppose the final conclusion of our discourse is to be, that I am to inform his lordship that you are not so sensible as I am of the honor he intended us."

"If by honor you mean obligation or favor, Sir, it is a word that ought never to be mentioned on either side, with reference to so sacred a contract as marriage, which makes the parties one in the sight of God, whatever may be the inequality of their conditions in the sight of man. I wish no man to fancy, because he is my superior in worldly distinctions, that he honors me by making me his wife; nor should I become attached to an inferior, as far as fortune may be concerned, could I either imagine myself, or wish him to imagine that I honored

him, by following the dictates of my judgment and my heart."

Louisa spoke with so much real dignity, and consciousness of rectitude of principle, that her father sighed as he looked at her, and thought how well a coronet would become her serene and lofty brow.

"I am very unfortunate, at any rate," said he, more communing with himself than addressing her, "in having a daughter, instead of a son, for my representative; and the very importance that would fill most young women with ambition only seems to make you more humble."

Louisa pitied her father, at that moment, for the ambition she could not share. "But my dear Sir," she said, affectionately, "you may still have a son for your representative, and of your own name, if you will. Receive poor Edward again—he has never willingly offended

you—he has every noble quality that can make him worthy of succeeding you—make him the heir to your landed property, and whatever fortune you may choose to assign me out of it, will I am sure, be enough for all my wishes."

"You may push your romance too far, Miss Longcroft," replied her father, moodily; "perhaps I may one day recollect your proposition—but however, we had better adjourn our meeting, as we seem to wander from the motion."

So saying he arose, and opened the door for Louisa.

"Do not part with me in anger, my dear father," said she, bending her polished forehead for his paternal kiss;—"I should be grieved indeed, if you could think I would willingly offend you."

"It is the first time in your life that you have grieved me, Louisa," said he, softened by her duteous appeal to his affection, "and I am

contented to believe that you have not now done so willing;" and imprinting the kiss of peace upon her forehead, he suffered her to leave the room.

CHAPTER XVI.

PERPLEXITIES.

It was very painful to Catherine, whose temper was ingenuousness itself, to be conscious of harbouring secrets from Louisa; but she had never been able to summon resolution enough, to mention to her the relation in which she stood with Hamilton, it was of course still more difficult to speak of Edward Longcroft,

after the disclosure he had made to her; yet, when Louisa wept day after day, after her cousin's departure, and fell into a state of dejection, not to be accounted for by any other occurrence, as Mr. Longcroft had not only left her mistress of her sentiments and actions, with respect to Lord Blakeney, but had likewise, to all outward appearance, recovered his usual formal composure, Catherine felt as if accessary to her griefs, and bitterly reproach abstraction of mind in herself, which had kept her from observing Edward Longcroft's partiality, in time to prevent its reaching that height, which might be the means of destroying his own prospects, and Louisa's peace.—Neither was Catherine more free from anxiety on her own account than on Louisa's.—Hamilton was obliged to set off for Brussels, at so short a notice, that he had only time to write her a note, to inform her

of his departure, and to complain of his having presented himself twice at Mr. Longcroft's, without being favored with admittance.—He did not, however, tell her what was the fact, that he had been so annoyed with Lady Charlotte Forsyth's imprudent conduct, and frantic jealousies, that he felt less than he otherwise would have done, the mortification of not seeing Catherine; for indeed he had scarcely been in a state of mind to present himself before her, and it was with the utmost sincerity, he conjured her to let him have the happiness, on his return, which, he hoped, would be within a few weeks, of finding her at Nethercross, where he might there devote all his best affections to her, and enjoy the delight of her society undisturbed.

Had any one told Hamilton, a year before, that twelve more revolving months would find him sighing in reality to escape the lures of

one of the most beautiful, and till her conduct forfeited her claim to respect, the most admired woman in the whole circle of fashion, that he might give himself up to the pleasures of retirement, and the artless attractions of a country girl, he would not have believed such a complete change in his feelings, habits and pursuits, could have been effected by any process or combination of circumstances less severe than the loss of his legs, or his eyes, or some other casualty, that should reduce him to a state of helplessness and decrepitude; yet it was effected simply by the dictates of his own good feelings, and good sense. True indeed is the Platonic maxim that "Things are known by their opposites," vice never appears so hateful as when opposed to virtue. The most unblushing libertine hates to see a depraved woman in company with the modest of her sex; avarice never appears so mean as when in the

presence of liberality, or cowardice so despicable as when opposed by bravery. And thus it was that Hamilton's heart reproached him in the peace and purity of Nethercross, with all his guilty pleasures, based in vanity, and ending in remorse and disgust, and Lady Charlotte's studied display of all her attractions, both personal and mental, her restless desire of shining in public, her *ennui* and ill-humour at home, when not under that excitement, and her utter forgetfulness of all her most sacred duties, formed a contrast every way disadvantageous for her, with the natural graces of Catherine's figure, the thoughtful eloquence of her countenance, the animating cheerfulness, the lovely disinterestedness of her disposition, the warmth of her fancy, the sublimity of her feelings, the unsophisticated rationality of her views, the strength of her affections, and above all, the devotion to all her feminine duties.— At first he had regarded her merely with the

affection, like that of a relative, due to her, as—

> " A creature not too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food,—
> For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
> Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears and smiles."

But soon this sentiment became tinctured with higher feelings of respect, as he discovered in her, every element, every promise of becoming

> " A perfect woman, neatly plann'd,
> To warm, to comfort, to command,
> And yet a spirit—still and bright,
> With something of an angel light."

Yes, whether he contemplated her in the sweet bloom of careless, joyous youth, or in the long perspective of matronly dignity and maternal tenderness, still he saw, he felt she was the being fashioned for his delight, his pride, his solace, his reformation. No wonder then that under such a virtuous, such a sacred impulse,

he should shrink from the guilt of any renewal of his intercourse with Lady Chralotte Forsyth, —but alas, too truly has it been said,—

"A shameless woman is the worst of men."

For sure it is that the corruption of the best becomes the worst; and when woman, whom nature made

"To temper man,"

falls from the excellences of her creation, the very virtues, which are her characteristics, become the sources of the most frightful vices; and all the sensibilities and lovelinesses which are meant to endear and charm, break out into lurid bursts of discord and reckless feeling, carrying like the comet, fearful and portentous blazes of light into the skies, which milder planets irradiate and adorn.

In vain did Hamilton entreat Lady Charlotte to remember what was due to society, to her rank, her husband and herself; and to return to

Sir William's protection, ere the scandal-loving world could have time to become acquainted with her flight from him. Violence, reproaches, hysterics, threats to destroy herself, were all the answers he could procure to his arguments, however soothingly put, or reasonably maintained; and as all caution was scorned by her ladyship as a meanness, as all "compunctious visitings" were rejected by her as a weakness, the waiters and inmates of the hotel were soon as well acquainted with the "delicate perplexities" of her ladyship's situation as she was herself, with the additional advantage of seeing them through the impartial medium of common sense. As, however, they did not think themselves bound to any particular secrecy in the matter, Hamilton had the mortification of seeing it pretty broadly alluded to in the various newspapers, which, in their zeal for public morals, make no scruple to offend private decency, whenever they can "set up a paragraph" by so doing, and a *Contributor*

to the Book of Beauties and other records, equally faithful, of modern female modesty and retiring worth, having secured a sketch of her ladyship at the Opera, from his station of General Surveyor, in the pit, took the advantage of her being "the Cynthia of the minute," to get it lithographed in a sort of poetic costume,

"Loose were her tresses seen, her bosom bare."

and underneath was written a favorite quotation of her ladyship's, probably supplied by some of her admirers, more particularly acquainted with her predelections,

"He little knew how much thy heart, Gulnare,
When soothed, could love, when roused, could greatly dare."

Hamilton bit his lips with rage, when he saw it in the print-shops;—a woman can never find any critic so severe, as a sated lover.

"*Gulnare*, indeed!" he exclaimed, almost audibly, as he walked on in double-quick time,

" Yes, she would do vastly well for one of Lord Byron's heroines. Thanks to his poetry, corsairs and cut-throats, and sentimental vagabonds, will find no lack of mistresses, for fifty years to come; whatever honest men may do of good wives—but it is five o'clock,—I must go and call upon her, or she will be like Medea and all her dragons—she will be playing some mad prank, like her crack-brained companion, Lady Caroline Agneau; and finely I shall be shewn up. But I am determined to go near her no more; unless she will hear reason, and return to her husband."

Thus did Hamilton chafe and fret in toils which, at first imperceptible as the spider's web, grew every moment more galling: and, whilst every one was condemning him, he was himself a prey to feelings of shame, vexation and remorse; which, though they could not redeem his fault, would, at least, in the eyes of the charitable, had they been aware of them, have

exonerated him from the additional charge, good-naturedly brought against him, by those who knew him not, of glorying in it.

Alas! an error, a crime may be laid open to the whole world, to the grief of the good, the exultation of the wicked; but the tears of blood which it may wring from the repentant sinner, are seen only by the eyes of Him who "looketh upon the heart."

London appeared a desart to Catherine, the moment she knew that Hamilton was no longer in it; and nothing would have detained her there but the dejection of Louisa's spirits, greatly increased by the stern, unyielding reply her father had sent to a letter from Edward, wherein he expressed his gratitude to his uncle for all the kindnesses he had shewn him; and at the same time, in a manly spirit of independence, begged to know explicitly, whether he was to consider himself as cast solely upon his own resources, in consequence of having had the mis-

fortune to incur his uncle's displeasure, as he only waited to know exactly the position in which he actually stood, in order to form his future plans; professing at the same time, his willingness to be guided in those plans by the wishes or advice of his uncle, if he would favor him with the communication of them.—To this appeal, Mr Longcroft returned the following cut absolute:—

"*Berkley Square, London,* —— 1818.

"SIR,

"You owe me no thanks for what you are pleased to term my past kindnesses, and which absence seems to have had great effect in magnifying on your memory. At the time that I conferred them, they were so many pleasures to myself; for I looked upon you as my son—you choose to destroy my illusion, and you must excuse me if I destroy yours, should you still indulge the idea, that you will be to me, henceforward, any thing but a stranger—as,

however, even in the case of a stranger, I should feel some compassion at seeing a person, who had been for years accustomed to luxuries, suddenly exposed to the chance of wanting necessaries;—I enclose you a check on my banker for two thousand five hundred pounds—this sum, properly placed, will secure you from actual want; and any provision beyond that would, I presume, be regarded as an insult, by a gentleman of your independent notions; and in full possession of your faculties; improved, as they have been, by an education, on which, I believe, you will do me the justice to acknowledge, no cost was grudged. As all the load of debt, which unhappily for you, was the sole inheritance your father had to leave you, has long since been liquidated by me, from sums set apart annually, for that purpose, out of my own income, you have an unblemished name to begin the world with; and all the favor I have to ask of you is, that should you ever be tempted to do any thing to dishonour

it, you will recollect that it is that of an ancient and honorable family, not unworthily represented, I hope, at this present time, by

"Sir,

"Your most obedient, humble servant,

"Edward Wyndham Cholmondeley Longcroft."

"What a letter!" exclaimed Louisa, with streaming eyes; for her father, with a refinement of tyranny, made her read, seal and direct it. "What a letter," when he had gone out of the room, "to send the orphan son of his brother—so excellent a young man too,—and after living with us ever since he was ten years old. Ah, my poor warm-hearted uncle, whatever might be his faults or his follies, he could not have behaved in such a manner. Ah, my dear Catherine, Longcroft Hall will not look like itself without him. No one can know how great his loss will be to me."

Catherine could only weep with Louisa, for

conscious of Edward's partiality for herself, she could not offer the hopes of his return, or of reconciliation with his uncle, which her wishes would otherwise have suggested. Neither could she ascertain exactly the nature of Louisa's regrets for his absence; they seemed mixed up with some feeling too tender for mere friendship; yet if they had love for their basis, would there not have been something more of wounded pride, some sense of resentment alike at his departure and its cause. It was not in nature for a woman to know herself tacitly refused, and not feel, at least, her delicacy hurt by so marked a proof of indifference, unless she herself shared in that indifference; yet if she did, whence the tears, the dejection, the languor she gave way to? Had she affected a heroism she felt not—was it possible she had seen Edward's dereliction from herself and had had the generosity to relinquish her long claim, upon his affections, in

favor of another object! Catherine started from this idea; so painful was it to think that she might have unconsciously destroyed the happiness of Louisa without being able to promote that of Edward. But whilst she was thus endeavouring to ascertain the state of Louisa's heart, that of her own was far more easily read by Louisa.

"No, she does not love Edward," said Louisa to herself, as she saw the variations of colour and countenance with which Catherine received the note that informed her of Hamilton's departure, "all her thoughts and feelings and faculties are absorbed by a man in every respect his opposite and unfit for her. She speaks of Edward kindly, but who could speak of him in any other manner that knows half his worth. She regrets his having left the house, but she regrets it only for the inconveniences he may be subjected to, and that she thinks I miss his

society and endearing attentions. For herself, I do not think she would have remarked his absence."

Thus did anxiety for each other's happiness fill the hearts even while it sealed the lips of these friends, and seemed to weave a veil of reserve between them.

Mr. Longcroft, meanwhile, had the mortification to receive his check back again, by return of post, enclosed in the following brief epistle: —

"SIR,

"I beg you will not imagine that I return you the enclosed check from any unbecoming feeling of pride. I am not too proud to accept a service, and I think with you that something might be due to one who is suddenly deprived of every thing he has been accustomed to, and cast upon a new scene of action. But a gift, accompanied by reflections on the memory of my father, and undeserved reproaches

towards myself, does not come within my ideas of what I could honorably accept. I therefore beg leave to decline it, with such thanks as your intention of serving me is entitled to. I would willingly add all the good wishes for yourself and my cousin Louisa which naturally spring up in the heart, towards objects long respected and beloved, when about to quit even the country they inhabit. I am on the point of leaving England, to seek in foreign climes that subsistence which it might not be agreeable to your feelings for me to endeavour to obtain in a country where I have been brought up with other prospects. By the time you receive this letter I shall have already embarked; and I trust, whenever you may hear of me again, you will have no reason to blush for the name of,

"Sir,

"Most respectfully,

"Your obliged Servant,

EDWARD LONGCROFT."

The information that his nephew had actually quitted England, was a great blow to Mr. Longcroft; obstinate people always expect that others will practise the virtue of submission—he had confirmed himself in the idea that he was right, by making up his mind, that Edward would, ere long, acknowledge he had been wrong; but now, that instead of soliciting his uncle's forgiveness, he had even gone out of the way of having it conceded to him, he began to think he had been too harsh, he recalled all Edward's amiable qualities, and dutiful attentions; and what weighed with him still more than any of them—his talents for public business; a general election was coming on—there was every probability that he would have been returned for a borough contiguous to that which Mr. Longcroft represented; and he began bitterly to repent, having, in a hasty moment, sacrificed the whole of his plans for years, because a portion of them had not succeeded to his wish.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOME.

The fields were "white unto harvest," when Catherine was safely delivered up to the fond and pious welcome of her father, by the attentive care of Mr. Dacres. The villages bore that air of peaceful and solitary quiet, which bespoke its inhabitants to be all engaged in the labors of the sickle, and Catherine was not sorry to think that the cheerful cares

of the season, which demanded the entire attention of most of her neighbors, would, for a time, relieve her from the hospitalities, the calls, and the parties, made expressly in honor of her return, with which she otherwise would assuredly have been immediately overwhelmed.

Not that Catherine's heart was altered—no; it sprung towards every well-known object with all its wonted warmth, and felt that no novelty, no gaiety, no enjoyments of luxury, no prospects of ambition, could ever bring to it the solid, the permanent delights of affection—and Home; but it was occupied by one dominant sentiment, and that sentiment was agitated by suspense, and depressed by doubts. Still she forgot every thing at the moment that she was in her father's arms, excepting that she was with him once more, to make him happy, as she had been wont to do; and when the first burst of feeling on both sides began to calm

itself into serenity, she looked round the garden, as she hung on her father's arm, recognising every shrub and flower with the pleasure of acquaintance; and then came Cæsar, jumping upon her with a violence that almost ludicrously contrasted with the form he assaulted with such rudeness of affection,—and then came Margaret, running to welcome "Miss Catherine," and old Rachel, more circumspectly, with head up-raised, and hands shielding her eyes from the dazzling rays of the sun, that she might be sure of the object she came out to see,—and then all the hens and chickens joined the party, and only the Canary birds remained, perforce, to receive the caresses of Catherine, through the tiny bars which restrained their willingness to come upon her fingers.

Catherine looked with delight on all around her, every thing was the same as when she had left it, yet every thing seemed altered—the

garden in which she had so often longed to wander, when she was suffocated with heat, in the large assemblies of Berkley Square, she now seemed too have traversed in half-a-dozen steps, the doors appeared so low that she involuntary stooped as she entered, the rooms shrunk into the dimensions of closets, and the kitchen and offices so near, that she fancied she had only to stretch her hand out to describe a circle that should touch them all,—she told her father so, he laughed at the effect of contrast which unconsciously influenced her.—

"What," he said, "you have grown proud —you want your halls, and fine staircases, and ante-rooms, and drawing-rooms—bless me! I doubt I have got a fine London lady back again instead of my daughter—do you forget how fond you used to be of the old song,—

> 'The giant ambition we never need dread,
> Our roofs are too low for so lofty a head.'"

"No, indeed, my dear father," said Cathe-

rine, seating herself on his knee, with all the endearing playfulness of a girl; "and if our roofs were not low enough already for such exclusion, I would wish them lower and lower, till they were no higher than a rabit-hutch.—No, I have seen nothing in London half so dear to me—as what I have seen here."—A sigh caught her concluding words, and she found out that she was fatigued, and her father found it out too.

"Come," said he, "my dear, you shall not exhaust yourself now with telling me any thing; you shall have tea, and go to bed, and to-morrow you will be fresh as a rose, I hope, for, let me tell you, I do not think you have improved your natural tints in London."

Rachel, thinking much more of the fatigue and difficulties of a journey from London, than some exploring spirits would of one to Africa had fenced the tea-table with all the appurtenances and addenda, which some forty years

ago, made a regular Yorkshire tea-drinking, a more solid refection than a fashionable modern dinner; and Catherine repaid her for all her trouble, by the affectionate smile with which she surveyed the eggs and the ham, and the shrimps and the cheesecakes, and all the varied tribes of plain cakes, and currant cakes, and white cakes, and matrimony cakes, and muffins, and *whigs*, (no want of respect to the tories,) and biscuits, and so-forth, which it used to be the pride of young ladies to make; and of their mammas and grandmammas, and aunts to eat, commend, and circulate receipts for, throughout the country.

"Why, Rachel! you have got a harvest supper ready instead of tea; here is enough for half-a-dozen travellers, all half-a-dozen times more hungry than I am;—and they look so nice too; what a pity it is that I cannot eat one tenth part as much as you thought I could—why Rachel, if you could make such cakes as these

in London, you would make your fortune, your tea-garden would be in such repute!"

"Ah Miss, but I hope I shall never make any thing in Lunnon, not even a fortin;—No, no;—I have never yet been out of Nethercross Parish; no more was my mother before me, and I hope I never shall—it would be a weary day to me, if ever I turned my head round, and missed sight of Castleberg scaur."

"Rachel would have done well for the old man of Verona," said Mr. Neville, "whom Claudian tells us of; who lived all his life within sight of that city, and never went within its walls."

"Claudian!" repeated Catherine, "is it not Claudian that gives such a beautiful description of Ceres seeking for her daughter?"

"Yes it is my dear—and a fine allegory couched in the story too;—yes, I am glad you have not forgot the classics."

Catherine wondered how her father could

suppose it possible; but resolving to think of nothing connected with them, that night; she received the benediction she had so long been obliged to forego; and soothed and supported by the thought, that she was once more under the protection of her beloved parent, she retired to rest;—the snow-white curtains of her bed, the heath-bleached sheets, fragrant with rose-leaves and lavender, the freshness of the air, the stilly indistinctness of distant rural sounds, the slight degree of fatigue which makes rest luxurious, the sweet consciousness of being again in the dear spot where she had first seen Hamilton,—where she might ere long hope to see him again; all soothed her senses and her spirits; and she soon sunk into a sweet and profound repose.

A single day sufficed to reinstate Catherine in her domestic duties, her simple pleasures, her serene studies:—her father's eyes glistened with delight, when he saw her again at his side;

and not even harvest-time prevented her neighbours from coming, as soon as they heard of her return, to welcome her home;—to congratulate their worthy minister on the pleasure of having his daughter back again; and to tell her, that neither the Church nor the Rectory had looked like itself without her. There was one visit of ceremony, however, which it was indispensable for Catherine to pay, instead of receiving, and that was to her friend Fanny, installed only the week before in the dignity of Mrs. Pugh, junior, and a house of her own. Catherine found her with all her blushing honors thick upon her, "sitting up for company," as it used technically to be termed, in her bridal attire, adapted to the occasion, between her two bride-maids, Miss Pugh and Miss Mason; whilst to every visitant that arrived, with a congratulatory courtesey of respect to the little matron, and "I wish you much happiness, Mrs. Pugh," accompanied with a sidelong look round the

room, at the new curtains, carpet and 'other moveables.' Chocolate, and cake and wine were brought in by the footboy, in bran new livery, assisted by a 'gentleman in waiting,' hired for the occasion, and who was the most newsy personage, next to Mally Garbutt, in the place, having like her, in virtue of his office, the *entrée* to all the houses of the gentlefolks in and around the village; and being as useful by his long experience, in marshalling the places, announcing names, and trimming refreshments at all the annual parties and state occasions, for which his services were in requisition, as the City Clerk is to his Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor, when he is first installed in the dignities of his office, and called upon to decide in labyrinths of right and wrong, cognisable or not cognisable, which left to his own native genius might occasionally give rise to fiats more original than satisfactory.

Fanny had been sitting in state thus, all the

morning, racking her brains for something suitable to say to each of her guests, and consoling herself, at intervals, by jumping up to look in the glass, wondering what Mr. Pugh was about, and entreating her bride-maids to help her out with the next comer. But when that next comer proved to be Catherine, all attempt at formality was at an end; and like the cat, who, metamorphosed into a fine lady, behaved quite well amid her guests, till a mouse ran across the floor, so at this temptation beyond her strength, Fanny flew forwards, at the imminent risk of rumpling her sleeves, and disordering her frills, seized Catherine in her embrace, and covered her with affectionate kisses, regardless of every body else in the room.

They were soon, however, relieved by the departure of the mere callers of ceremony, and Fanny, declaring she would see no more company that day, rang the bell, an operation she found particularly agreeable, never having been

accustomed to it at her mother's or grandmother's, and told the boy in livery to inform the man out of livery that she should not be "at home" any longer; and then to go and tell Mr. Pugh, that when he could get time to leave "the shop," for in that remote district people called things by their right names, she should be glad to see him. "He will be so glad too, now those tiresome people are gone, but they may all be patients, one day or other, he says, so you know it would not do to affront them; and, indeed, independent of that, I should be very sorry to be rude, and so would he—you cannot think how good-natured he is—and I am so happy! I'm sure people are quite right to marry. I wish every body I love was married and as happy as I am. But I must shew you my house," and with all the innocent pride of a young married woman, she led the way from the kitchen to the attic; exhibiting every room, opening the closets, shewing all her treasures,

expatiating upon her good fortune and perfect contentment; and drawing the sincerest congratulations from Catherine, whose heart responded to all the present felicities, and prospective prosperities of her young friend.

"Yes," thought she, "Fanny is right in considering herself fortunate. Mr. Pugh suits her, and she suits him. She has had the pleasure of a courtship sanctioned by those it was her duty to obey, and unembittered by anxieties, jealousies, or cares. And she now has a circle of social duties and affections, in which she will find daily increasing interest, and contribute to the comfort and happiness of all around her."

These reflections did not arise in Catherine's bosom without a sigh, as the contrast of her own peculiar situation presented itself: and similar reflections and sighs were again and again awakened when she went a few days after to Blackthorn Cottage, as she always did in the

harvest-time, in order that she might relieve her sister of the care of the children, during this period of additional domestic occupation, to which the increased number of labourers, all, according to the considerate usage of the county, paid in meal as well as wages, necessarily gave rise.

There is, perhaps, no spectacle in civilised society more delightful than that of a large, well-cultivated, and thriving farm, during this interesting period; when not only sturdy manhood, but even age and infancy alike find some thing come within their power of sharing in the general cheerful utility and bustle of the scene; and seeming to earn their portion of the bounties which a merciful providence bestows, year after year, in gracious accordance with the promise, that so long as man exists, "seed-time and harvest shall not fail."

Henry Barton appeared to particular advantage at this holy season, for so it ought to be

felt—a season of gratitude and joy. As he walked about, like Boaz among his reapers, and often like him with the gentle and lovely partner of his fortunes at his side, his figure assumed dignity among the many who looked up to him for the wages commensurate with the importance of their toils, and on which they depended for most of their winter comforts. Naturally liberal, and his mind enlarged by the extensive scale on which his occupations were carried on, he was mindful of the scriptural precept, not to muzzle the ox that trod out his corn, nor to lay down his head to rest with the poor man's wages in his hand; and, as what was honestly and industriously earned was always cheerfully as well as liberally paid for by him, he stood with his servants and labourers on the only truly desirable system of equality—an equality of benefits received and imparted, a reciprocity of obligation, willingly acknowledged.

Catherine had always admired the independence of Henry Barton's character, and the rectitude of his principles; his manly and unabated, or rather constantly increasing affection for her sister, rivetted still more strongly her regard for him. Amelia was very particular all the harvest-time, to have an early supper prepared under her own directions, with additional care and neatness, even amounting to a little shew of luxury, to make up to her husband for a dinner hastily taken in the middle of the day, and when his active exertions over, he came in and took his seat next to her, and

" Press'd her matron lip with kisses pure,"

with the dignity of a husband and the fondness of a lover, Catherine rejoiced in the perfection of their domestic comfort. The bright harvest-moon too shone, with " round unwrinkled face," on their repast in the pretty parlour, which on one side opened upon the green, by glass doors,

and on the other looked into the farm-yard, whence songs of hilarity were heard from the reapers, whilst they also enjoyed their evening-meal, set forth for them with all comfort in one or other of the spacious barns, which their labours each day were contributing to fill.

But alas! sights of happiness are not sufficient to fill the heart, however disinterested and benevolent it may be. The presence of Catherine completed the domestic comfort of the Bartons; her ever ready services, during the day, lightened Amelia of half her fatigues, and turned the other half into sources of mirth and playful rivalry: whilst her conversation in the evening, gave an intellectual relish to their social meal, and delighted Henry by drawing out the powers in himself, of which he naturally felt a little proud, because he knew they were at any rate superior to those of most of his surrounding associates; and that he was indebted solely to his own industry for their cultivation.

But Catherine diffused more contentment than she felt; and when her brother and sister affectionately kissed her at the door of their apartment, when they went to rest, thanking her every night for the pleasure she had given them, she retired to her own, lonely and disquieted, wondering she did not hear from Hamilton; and dissatisfied with being even a few hours ride from Nethercross; because the distance, short as it was, might be the means of delaying her receipt of his letter, for one whole day, whenever it should arrive. At length so restless did her impatience become, that she could no longer withstand her desire to return home. It seemed to her, that in not being in the place where she well knew Hamilton would constantly picture her to his imagination, the sweet tie of sympathy was injured.

"It is a sort of deception upon his feelings," thought she, "it is as if he thought of a phantom,—as if I did not really exist for him;—

ah, too happy should I be, could I know his haunts, his occupations, his walks, his residence, as well as he does mine,—it would not seem like separation! but I will not wrong him of a pleasure denied to me—no, I will—I must return—I shall seem with him once more, when I am on the very spot where he imagines me to be, and no more will I quit it, till I have the happiness of going where he goes, and staying where he stays."

Poor Catherine! her heart could well have finished the sentence, "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God!" Oh if she had had at that moment presented to her view

> ——————— "that orb of glass so bright,
> Which Merlin for King Ryance did contrive!
> That wonderous orb so bright, wherein did live
> The forms of things unborn, which to the sight
> Or ever time had brought them into light,
> Its high enchanted powers could strangely give."

or that which the famous magician of later days

held to the love-sick Surrey, and showed him in it, his Geraldine, reclining on a couch

"Sick with sighing languishment,"

and reading one of his sonnets by the light of a waxen taper.

Happily distant scenes, and future events are alike concealed from us; and happy very often would it be for us, if we were to forbear endeavouring to realize the one, or anticipate the other. Ashamed to tell her sister that she wished to leave her sooner than usual, yet unable to command sufficient resolution to make her visit of its accustomed length, Catherine wrote to her father, ere half the time originally fixed for it, had expired, to entreat that he would come himself for her, the very day after he should have received her letter, or send John Leng, the clerk, groom, hind, bailiff, or body-guard, as occasion might require, with the mar-

vellous *double horse*, the mention of which, had so greatly amazed Mr. Halston.

"The time seems so long, my dear father," said she, with a truth, which like the ancient oracles, conveyed a very different meaning to the receiver, from that understood by the propounder, "that has already estranged me from my dear '*dulce domum*,' that I find a second absence from it so soon, more than my spirits or resolution can support. The dear, dear Rectory, and every object connected with it, is constantly before my eyes. Our pretty quiet parlour, your arm chair, yourself, my dear father, I shall die of *la maladie du pays*, if you do not recall me to your presence; you must want me as much as I want you;—I am sure you do—say so then, and by so saying you will give me a reasonable plea, for the happiness of returning, without hurting the feelings of either Amelia or Henry, who are both of them ten times more

amiable, and more happy than ever. Ah, my dear father, the great people, if they saw them might say to each other,—

"——— ——— when meet now
Such pairs in mutual love and honor joined!"

nevertheless, leave them I must, and I can do so with a safe conscience, as the wheat will all be in this week; consequently, the labourers will be put on the peace establishment, and Miss Catherine the less, having cut the tooth which had fretted her so much the last two months, now wisely recovers in 'sound unbroken rest,' the time which, on my first arrival, she lost, (poor little darling,) in crying half the night long, as much to my grief as her own."

This letter was despatched to Nethercross, the next market-day, along with a goodly portion of butter and eggs. Catherine's heart smote her, as Amelia recommended it to the special care of the bearer, charging him to see

Mr. Neville himself, and to tell him that Miss Catherine and all the family were quite well; children and all.

The least consciousness of any thing like disguise or artifice is painful and humiliating to an ingenuous mind—Catherine felt it on sending her letter, and she felt it again on receiving the answer—but the disappointment it contained was quite punishment sufficient for her fault.—To her surprise and mortification, her father, for the first time within her remembrance, appeared unmindful of her wishes,—he wrote to her immediately on receiving her letter, but it was only to beg her not to think of returning home a single day before the time she had originally fixed, nor even then, unless she heard from him again, to inform her of the precise time when he would send the "Squire of Dames," John Leng, with "sure-footed Ball," to take her back to the Rectory.

There was an air of constraint in Mr. Neville's letter which Catherine was unable to account for,—surely he could not be displeased at her having expressed a wish to return to him?—the thought of this being possible, though any thing but probable, increased her longing to be with him once more, that she might pour all her feelings into his paternal bosom, and tell him, without reserve, all the particulars of her situation; she had hitherto withheld from so doing, both by the timidity inseparable from the consciousness of nourishing, for the first time, feelings as delightful as they are new, as absorbing as they are inexplicable, and also by her anxiety to be able to speak with truth from longer acquaintance, in praise of Hamilton's merits, and in extenuation of his faults, or rather, she would say, the appearance of faults in him,—for she could not bring herself to think, that he could really ever have had any thing more serious to answer for,

than the vanity which, in being contented to incur the censures due to vice, was certainly guilty of an injury to virtue. "But then who is perfect?" she would say to herself, "my dear father himself is always saying that we live but from day to day, to become wiser and better,—and Hamilton must be already wiser and better than when he first came to us, satiated with the follies and wickedness of dissipated life, or else he would not bestow his affections upon a country girl like myself, without connections, without fortune, without accomplishments, without any thing but a heart capable of valuing his love, and beating only for him. Yes, he has the seeds of every virtue in him, be it my happy taste to cultivate them, and make them bring forth good fruit, and—oh, how proud shall I be of him, and how grateful when I know that his fine countenance and noble figure are but the index and herald of thoughts and actions suited to his rank in

society, to the precious talents he has received, and for the use of which he will one day be called upon to account; oh, too blest shall I be, if it please Heaven to make me the humble instrument of his well-doing." Such was the perpetual theme of Catherine's thoughts—enraptured admiration of all that could be admired in him, tender excuses for whatever might be censured, fond anticipations of the bliss of belonging wholly to him, of the right to share his fate, his fortune and his being, of becoming all and every thing to him, as he already was to her, joined to her defference to his rank and fortune, the importance of which she loved to magnify to her imagination, because, by so doing, she magnified the love which invited her to share them, all united in Catherine to form a love as pure as devoted, as fervent as ever woman's heart gave birth to, and so calculated to ensure the happiness and promote the interests of its object, that a wise

and good man would, indeed, have deemed it a treasure "beyond rubies," the pearl of price. It was not in Catherine's nature to cloud the happiness of others with uneasinesses of her own, she therefore ventured to reconcile herself to the term of her absence from home; chided her impatience that made it necessary for her to take a resolution on the subject, helped her sister, as usual, with her domestic concerns in the mornings, played in the meadows with her little nephew and niece, as much a child as themselves, read in the evenings with her brother-in-law, and only allowed herself, when she shut her door for the night, to say—"Another day is over—it is another day nearer seeing my dear father again—perhaps, Hamilton! I know he will come as soon as he can get away from Brussels,—no balls, no fêtes will tempt him to stay in London,—and then he will disclose his intentions to my father,—my dear father, surely he will be glad to see

his Catherine the wife of one he loves so much, to whom indeed he owes all he has."—And then visions of a very secondary nature with her, to the hopes and principles on which the basis of her happiness was fixed, and yet which it would have been equally strange and dull in her to be entirely unvisited by, visions of rank and wealth would float before her eyes, half closing on her pillow, and she would calculate, to herself, what good she might be enabled to do, as the wife of a man of fortune, what patronage in the church might come within the power of an earl, should Hamilton become Earl of Winterdale, what farms might be vacant on his estates, and where those estates might be; in short, what she could do for her father—what for her brother—how far she might be removed from them—how often she should be able to see them, for so sweetly was Catherine's mind organised, that those images of grandeur and importance, which

would have inflated many others, were in her, only connected with the hope of serving the dear objects of her affection, and the delight of knowing that they would be happy in her happiness, and exalted in her exaltation.

CHAPTER XVII.

A TRIAL.

When Catherine returned to the Rectory, just as the Harvest-moon was beginning to wane, the accustomed limit of her visit at this season of the year, to Blackthorn Cottage, she was struck with an expression in her father's countenance which she had never before seen. It was not precisely that of illness, yet the anxiety it was marked with, gave him an air of *malaise* which she could not account for on any other supposition. He assured her, however,

in answer to her eager enquiries on the subject of his health, that he was perfectly well; but even the tones of his voice, as he answered her, had something in them mournful and broken, which seemed to belie the purport of his words. Catherine ran into the kitchen to question Rachel how her father had been during her absence; but Rachel, seated at her spinning-wheel, looked as solemn as one of the *Parcæ*, and was as mysterious in her replies.

"But then what is the matter, for I know something is," said Catherine; "you say my father has been very well, and yet you shake your head, and twirl your thread, and will not even look up at me. Now, my darling old Rachel, you shall tell me before you give your wheel one turn more—has my father had any thing to vex him?"

"Nay, Miss, we are all vexed at times.—Wae's-heart—it's a vexatious world we have to go through."

"Well, but has any thing particular happened? Have any of the parishioners behaved amiss? Has any thing gone wrong among them?"

"No, Miss," said Rachel, turning her wheel with increased celerity, "nothing like it,—no, no; now you've come back, Master will be like himself again, he never is when you are away—that is, he's always comfortable, thank God, but he does not joke or laugh, as I like to see him, when you are with him.—But you must be tired with your long ride; and you must want something. Margaret, come, look sharp, and get over *agate*," and with this *classical* expression, which so many of Shakespeare's commentators have been puzzled to explain, and which with many other genuine *restes* from

"The pure well of English undefiled,"

they may hear every day in Yorkshire, Rachel putting away her wheel suspended her office of

spinster to resume that of *chef de la cuisine*, whilst Margaret, with the same air of mysterious gravity which made all the party look as if they had been taking a peep into the cave of Trophonius, began to rattle the knives and forks, and make all the bustle she could, as if she wished to escape any questions that it might fall to her share to answer. Rachel's culinary skill was always exerted in a more than usual degree whenever any thing like a "welcome home again," seemed to claim the exertion of it,—but now it was displayed in vain; Catherine, saddened and uncomfortable, she knew not why, could not eat a morsel; and her father, though he pressed her to do so, did not encourage her by setting the example.

"Are you displeased with me, my dear father," Catherine timidly asked, as she bent her forehead towards him, for his accustomed benediction.

"Displeased, my child?" he reiterated, "and

with you!—God forbid! it would be the first time since you were born, and I trust I shall be spared such an affliction, for at least as many years as I have been already;"—he kissed her with even more than usual fondness, as he spoke; and Catherine ascended the stair-case with a lighter heart, willing to imagine that the gravity she had remarked, existed only in her own imagination, or, at least, that it originated in some passing occurrence in which she had no share, and of which she hoped no traces would be left next day. Still she did not feel easy enough to go immediately to rest. She looked among her books to beguile her mind with an hour's reading,—she had begun the *Gieruselemme Liberata* of Tasso, whilst in London, for she had gone through the translation of the Greek and Roman Poets, selected for her by her father, and had the pleasure of being able to read the Italian ones in the original. The volume was not, however, in its ac-

customed place, but on searching round the room for it, she perceived it under her dressing glass. Catherine was so exact, that it was quite an event to her, who had always "a place for every thing, and every thing in its place," to find any thing any where but where she expected it was to be found. She took up the book with a slight feeling of surprise how it came there; Margaret being fully as exact as her young mistress, whom, happily for herself, she made it her pride to imitate; but surprise was swallowed up in a more intense sentiment of amazement, when, on opening the volume, a paper dropped from it, in the writing of Hamilton. A cold damp started upon Catherine's forehead, as she recognised his hand; it bore the date of the very day that she had written to her father, to beg him to send for her home.

Alas! then, too surely he had been at the Rectory, during her absence, and had quitted it without seeing her!—what a sickening feeling

wafted across her heart at that instant, chased the next by the deep, unequal throbbings which agitated it as she began to read the lines on which all her future happiness seemed to depend.

"My Catherine, my dear Catherine," they began, "alas I have no right to call you mine! I have promised your father, I will relinquish even the hope of ever doing so; and I am guilty, in some measure, of a breach of that promise, in thus bidding you farewell. Yes, Catherine, your good and honourable father has rejected my suit, and unless you will plead it yourself, I fear no influence with him, that I possess, will ever be sufficient to make him alter the decision which to my anxious fears appear irrevocable. He is too noble minded to be dazzled by those advantages of fortune, which I had deemed it my happiness to be able to offer the object of my love—he does not think me worthy of his daughter. I revere his independence for telling

me so; but he dares not trust her happiness to my keeping; and here it is I cannot but feel he does me cruel injustice. Yes, Catherine, whatever I may have been, and many have been the circumstances, that candour would admit in palliation of it,—whatever I may have been hitherto, what I should have been henceforward, can only be known to myself and Him who takes account of virtuous resolves, as well as of vicious actions; but, if I know myself, if I am sure of my existence, I think I am as sure that your father would have had no reason to repent entrusting his most precious treasure to my charge. Oh Catherine, had you been here, the sweet eloquence of your looks, would have done more for me, than all the impassioned vehemence of my own words. The disappointment which made every thing appear a blank to me, the moment I was told that you were not at home, was a foreboding of the bitter mortification that awaited me—why did you go away?

—you ought to have known, to have felt that I was coming. I thought to delight you with the surprise of seeing me without sending any previous notice; and severely am I punished for my folly.—Why should I in my vanity have sought

> 'To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
> And add a perfume to the violet.'

Was not my Catherine's own sweet, genuine emotions enough to fill the soul of any mortal being? but I must attempt to heighten them, even into pain—blind epicurean! Alas, Catherine, in losing you, I lose my hope of future good; my lovely monitress, my sweet example, from whom I could, without humiliation, have learned to correct my faults, and improve my virtues, when your quick eyes should have discovered any to improve. O Catherine, I must not, cannot lose you! I have associated you with myself, as the dear companion of my fate, the sharer of my fortunes,—rather the loved

ornament of them—the sacred fount of every new and tender feeling; and I can not, will not, forego the dream of happiness, which you yourself have taught me to indulge.—Yet what do I say! where is my sense of honor, of gratitude to your venerable father—of respect to my plighted word?—I have promised him, Catherine, that I will renounce you—at least, that I will not seek you,—it is then on you alone that I have to rely,—my fate is in your hands,—cherish me in your remembrance—sustain me by your letters, until the obstacles that now present themselves to our union, which I had thought so near—for which I had made all my arrangements, shall have gradually disappeared, and rely on the unalterable attachment of

"Your devoted,

"Arthur Hamilton."

What a trial was this letter to Catherine—the

thought that Hamilton had indeed been, and was gone without her knowing of it—that if indeed she were to be called upon to relinquish him, she should not even have the melancholy pleasure of taking leave of him, and of treasuring up their parting, "aye in her heart of heart,"—amazed and terrified, as much as it grieved her. Yielding to her first impulse, she ran down stairs, with streaming eyes, to ease her oppressed bosom, by disclosing its conflicting feelings to her father;—but when she reached the door, and found it was half open, she hesitated to enter, for he was deeply engaged in a ponderous volume; his venerable silver locks fell forward and shadowed his features, as he bent over the page; his night-candle was lighted beside him, and she dreaded to interrupt the tranquillity of his mind, just before he retired to rest.

"He will not close his eyes," thought she, "if he sees me unhappy. No—I will wait till

morning, a few hours more of suspence, added to my misery, will make but little difference to me." and she stole softly back to her apartment; but she was too wretched, too restless to be able to compose herself, and after taking a few turns up and down the room, she again left it, and ascended to Rachel, who opening her eyes at the sound of footsteps, and seeing the bloodless visage of her young mistress at her bed-side, at such an unusual hour, half screamed with terror; but Catherine instantly spoke, to put her fears to flight.

"Do not be alarmed, Rachel. I am quite well, at least I am not ill, and nothing is the matter—but I could not sleep, just now, if I were to go to bed—so I thought I would come up to you, for a minute or two:—it is not the first time I have kept you waking, is it Rachel?"

"No, Miss, not by many a one; but it would be the first time you had ever vexed me with it; and yet I have had you weaning time, and

teething time, and all, with me; for your dear mamma was too delicate, poor lady, to be able to cope with bad nights, for its a true saying, that bad nights make bad days—and the deary me! Miss Catherine, I'm sure you look the image of your sweet mamma, now; I don't like to see you look so pale; but may be its with holding candle up so close to your face, it makes you look for all the world like a ghost."

Catherine faintly smiled. "O there is nothing the matter with me, Rachel," said she, "I have been quite well all the time I have been away; but I fancy my father does not seem quite so cheerful as usual—he has had a visitor, has he not, in my absence?"

Rachel seemed a little confused. "Why yes, Miss, he has. I don't like to deny it—he will tell you himself most likely—though he told me not to say any thing about it."

"But I know it," said Catherine, "it was Colonel Hamilton. I only wish you to tell me

how long he staid—and if he seemed well, and in good spirits."

"Why Miss, as for that, he was in high spirits enough when chaise set him down at door," (be it known that in Yorkshire the definite article is regarded, by speakers in Rachel's class, as an unmeaning expletive,) "and looked as handsome as a general; but he was sadly vexed you wasn't at home, and he kept getting graver and graver, till he was quite downhearted at last, and day he went away, he was quite stark beside himself."

"How long did he stay?"

"Four days, Miss. I don't think he would have staid so long, for master and he didn't seem, like, to set their horses so well as when he was here before, but I think he waited for letter from Lunnun; at least Mr. Dacres came day after he got here, and had deal of talk with master; and when he got back to his own house, he wrote a letter to Lunnun, at least Mally

Garbutt said there was letter went to Lunnun same day, from his house; and she was sure it was his hand, and most likely it was, for there was only two letters more, Mally said, to take to coach that day, and one of them was from the old gentleman Mr. Pugh, to Druggist at York, and t'other was from Tommy Snipclose, Tailor in back street, to that man at Skipton that's owed him so long for a coat—at least Mally Garbutt said she was positive sure it was about that—and then fourth day after, Mr. Dacres had a Lunnun letter come, and Mally said she was sure it was in answer to that he had written; and then Mr. Dacres and master had a long talk; and after that Colonel Hamilton would not touch a morsel at dinner, and I had roasted a brace of partridges on purpose for him, first we had had, *to-year*, and such beauties they looked! with crumbs, and bread-sauce and all, fit for a Lord Mayor. But he would neither eat nor speak, and went away in

such a taking, poor gentleman, it grieved me to see him."

Catherine could ask no more questions.—"Well," said she, "Rachel, I will not keep you awake now; my father will tell me all about it, I dare say, in the morning; so good night, God bless you." and she once more returned to her room, and betook herself to a sleepless pillow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN EXPLANATION.

The good Rector shook his head when he saw Catherine at the breakfast table.

"My child," said he, "you have not slept," there was a tone of condolence in his voice that touched "the string on which hung all her sorrows," it vibrated to her heart, she covered her face, and wept. At length recovering herself, she said, with all the composure she could

assume—"So Colonel Hamilton has been here, father?"

"He has, my child; but how did it happen that you got to hear of it. I told Rachel and Margaret not to say any thing about it. But women are loquacious animals, 'mulieres loquaciores,' as Plautus says."

"No, indeed, Sir, Margaret said not a word, nor Rachel neither, until I went up stairs to her, last night, and asked her, if you had had any visitors whilst I was at Blackthorn Cottage; and of course you did not wish her to deny it. —Besides," she continued, after a moment's hesitation, "I know it from Colonel Hamilton himself, for I found this letter in my Tasso, when I went to bed."

The Rector shook his head—"That was not quite right in Colonel Hamilton," said he, "but, however, he is somewhat of a spoiled child of Fortune—and one can scarcely expect him to submit at once and entirely to, perhaps, the first

serious contradiction to his wishes that he has ever met with."

"Will you read the letter, Sir?" said Catherine, offering it to him in humble deprecation of his displeasure.

"No, my dear child, there is no occasion—I can imagine the contents. I respect his wounded feelings, and I have quite sufficient confidence in both his honor and yours, to feel certain that you will neither of you make any attempt, either openly or secretly, to continue, by correspondence or otherwise, an acquaintance, which, however painful to myself to say so, I feel imperiously called upon to declare it my desire should be terminated immediately."

What a shock was this decisive, unlooked for fiat of her father's to Catherine! Unaccustomed to dispute his will, venerating his slightest wish, reverencing his judgment and his principles, how could she for one moment bear the idea of acting, or even thinking in opposition to them!

Yet, on the other hand, to give up Hamilton, without even an effort to obtain permission to retain him; to know him censured, perhaps calumniated, without making any attempt to vindicate him, to recover for him the esteem he seemed so suddenly to have lost, was contrary alike to her affection and her generosity.

"My dear father!" she exclaimed, as soon as her tears allowed her utterance, "is there any thing on earth could make me happy, if I sought or obtained it in opposition to your wishes! No—you introduced me to Colonel Hamilton—"

"I did, I did," said the poor Rector, kissing his darling's forehead, "it was unwise in me to do so."

"You rejoiced in the notice he took of me."

"I did—I did—it was the dearest compliment he could pay my old age."

"You were delighted with seeing me so happy in his society."

"I was, my child, I was—it seemed to renew

the pleasures of my youth—I was wrong, very wrong."

"But why, my dear father, were you wrong? Is it possible for any human being to have behaved better than Colonel Hamilton behaved, all the time he was under our roof? Is it possible for any thing to have been more honorable, more generous than his conduct since he has left us?"

Catherine wept afresh as she thus made the eulogium of him whose merits alone she remembered at that moment—"Oh, my dear father," she sobbed forth, throwing her arms round his neck, "I thought you would have been so happy."

"I know, my darling, I know very well," said the Rector, and his own cheek was moistened with more tears at that moment than it caught from being pressed to Catherine's, "I know all that you thought, and wished, and hoped—but I ought to have considered earlier

the probability that these thoughts and hopes and wishes, always entwined, my Catherine, in the female mind, with all that is purest and best, might be called forth, and to have ascertained their basis. My dear child, I know Colonel Hamilton's good qualities; I am his father's debtor, for the very roof that has seen all my happiness; and I am his debtor for the generosity with which he meant to have marked his manly, disinterested attachment for my Catherine, who would have done honor to the choice by which I felt honoured;—but my dear child, ill should I do my duty as a parent, and as a minister of the most high and sacred calling that mortal can be called upon to assume, did I suffer any feelings of personal partiality,—any prospect of worldly aggrandisement for my child, or for myself, to confound my perceptions of right and wrong; my internal sense of what is due from me as a parent,—as a professor and propounder

of gospel-truths, and as a member of civilized society, which can only be held together by respect for the social principles on which its rights and privileges are founded."

Catherine, awed by the solemnity of her father's manner, resumed her chair; but still retained his hand in her's, whilst with a speaking look, she seemed to urge him to proceed.

"When Colonel Hamilton first came to us, my child," he continued, "it was to seek a temporary place of concealment, until the issue should appear, of a duel in which he had most unhappily been involved with Sir William Forsyth,—respecting the duel itself, there were, according to the account he gave me of it, as many palliating circumstances, (humanely speaking,) as such an act can admit of. Colonel Hamilton was the challenged, not the challenger; and after receiving his antagonist's ball in his arm, he intended to have fired his own pistol in the air; but by an untoward chance,

its contents lodged in the breast of Sir William, who ran forward on seeing him stagger, and for a time the wound was considered so dangerous, that Colonel Hamilton, had he not, at the pressing instance of his second, taken refuge in flight, would have been held amenable to the laws till the issue should be known. Happily for him, Sir William recovered;—but the crime against the Almighty is the same; it is murder or suicide in intention, if it is not in act. We pray against sudden death—we view it as a calamity, when it visits us in our lawful and peaceable occupations; we trust to the goodness of our heavenly Father, to preserve us from it in threatened danger; yet we rush upon the chance of it ourselves, at every suggestion of pride or passion, as if it were only to be deprecated, when it is a mandate from our Creator, who calls us all when it is best for us to go, and not at all to be dreaded when we invite it ourselves, with murderous weapons in

our hands, raised against our fellow-creature, and with our souls inflated with the feelings of exultation of self, and hatred of another, which we know must of themselves alone utterly incapacitate us for heaven."

"But duels are not always entered upon from malignant motives," said Catherine, timidly; "I have heard Colonel Hamilton himself say, that it was possible to go out with a person for whom you might entertain a perfect esteem, but that as society is constituted now, differences will sometimes occur, which, being entirely matters of feeling, cannot be settled in any other way, as they cannot be defined, like points of law, in a court of justice."

"But they might, like points of conscience, in a court of equity," said Mr. Neville, more impatiently than he was wont to argue. "Why not arbitrate such fine, invisible distinctions, they could find cobweb-brained

juries enough, I dare say, if they made it the fashion, if the provencals could bring princes and warriors to abide by their fantastic decisions, in their ‘ courts of love,’ surely, for conscience sake, in our own days, some means might be found of proving the courage, and saving the honor of enlightened beings, without having recourse, on every paltry misunderstanding, to the chance of sending one or other of the offended parties to the Eternal World!—Lawyers do not fight—physicians do not fight—commercial men do not fight,—they know how to protect their honor and interest by regulations among each other,—nay, even the Jockey Club settle their gambling disputes without fighting, they allow no appeal from their decisions, and no gentleman gambler presumes to think himself injured, or insulted by them.—But it is a waste of words to dwell upon the sins of duelling. A man who is a christian in faith and principle, as well as in

name, can no more give, or even accept a challenge, than he could commit murder, or rob a man on the high-way; and I grieve that my Catherine's fine natural perceptions of right and wrong, should be clouded even for a moment, by the sophisms of a mere man of the world."

"No, my dear child, far rather would I give thee to a plain good man, like Henry Barton, a sincere christian, and a worthy member of society, even if he had only a yoke of oxen in the world, and guided themself in the plough, as Cincinnatus did in the best days of Rome, than do such an evil thing as expose a heart and mind like thine to the contagion for life of manners, over which thy innocence would have no controul, and of maxims learned in a world, all the wisdom of which is in a state of direct enmity with the word of God."

"But, indeed, my dear father," said Catherine, melting afresh into tears, "you wrong

Colonel Hamilton, if you think him so devoted to the world. I know how often he has declared himself disgusted with it; you have seen how contented he could be without it, and I am certain he would be a very different man under different circumstances,—every one may know his faults, for he takes no pains to hide them, but none can know his virtues so thoroughly as I do."

"I believe it, my dear Catherine; I believe you know his virtues, and that the chief part of them are of your own calling forth; but, Catherine, his virtues are impulses—his vices are habits, it pains me, my dear child, to enlighten you with that kind of knowledge, which only shews human nature and human life, in the opposite of what it was intended to be; and painful it is to sully your youthful purity, by alluding to crimes which, however common in dissipated life, are happily in our secluded path, never obtruded on our observation,—but if even

my indulgence towards Hamilton, could make me get the better, with respect to himself individually, of the repugnance I have always felt for the character of a duellist, yet there are circumstances, I am sorry to say, connected with the cause of the duel he fought, circumstances I was utterly ignorant of, long after he was domesticated with us, which must inevitably separate him for ever from me, as my son-in-law;—oh, Catherine, how it wrings my heart to see your cheek turn pale as I speak, and to feel the cold damp of disappointment and grief thus chill the hand I hold; but, ill should I do my duty as a parent, if I could give my daughter in marriage to a man, who has already shewn himself so little sensible of the sacredness of that most holy union, as to seek the wife of another, publicly enough to draw down upon himself the censures of every good person, and even to endanger his own life, and the life of the husband he so grossly wronged."

Catherine was indeed pale and agitated; for how could she deny what her eyes had too painfully forced upon her conviction,—the shameless vanity of Lady Charlotte Forsyth; the weakness of Hamilton in being flattered by her blandishments—but beyond this she had no idea of censuring him. That he had ever entertained a deliberate thought of guilt, she could not bring herself a single moment to imagine, and she now endeavoured to impart the same confidence in his honor to the Rector; but he shook his head.—

"My dear," said he, "if I had not thought of Colonel Hamilton when he first came, as you do now, he never would have been retained beneath my roof, humble as it is, beyond the first night he sought its shelter,—but his explanation at the time was short, and somewhat obscure,—I did not like to pry into his affairs at the moment of his distress, and to say the truth, no thought of evil, excepting that

always attendant on duelling, entered my head at the time, and afterwards, when particular circumstances excited some suspicions in me, that he might have to blame, in more respects than I at first imagined, I still saw so much good in him that I was willing to hope he might be reclaimed from the error of his ways, and become a valuable member of society! But when he presented himself before me as a candidate for my Catherine's hand, I could not, however I might be gratified by his appreciation of her worth, and by his generous intentions towards both her and myself, for he brought with him, along with a draft of the settlements, a deed of gift for the purpose of making me independent the remainder of my days. I could not think of placing my daughter's happiness and principles in the keeping of any man of whom I had not a thorough knowledge; and as I had no means, myself, of ascertaining Colonel Hamilton's moral habits, I sent for Mr. Dacres,

and confiding every thing to him I entreated him as a friend, a neighbour, and a brother-minister, to advise me how to act. He, having many connections in town, who moved in the same circles as Colonel Hamilton, kindly wrote to some of them for an impartial character of him, but I am sorry to say, the account, though favourable in every point of integrity and honour, according to the acceptation of the word in a mere worldly sense, though highly flattering with regard to his bravery, his talents, and his influence, was yet, with regard to his conduct with Lady Charlotte Forsyth, so doubtful, to say the best of it, that I could not reconcile it to my conscience, as a parent; nay, why should I do injustice to my calling, by assigning any inferior motives for my scruples, as a minister of the word of God, and his commandments, to countenance the suit of, and recommend my daughter to look up to, a man, as her head, her teacher, and her guide, who has proved himself

unable to resist temptation, and careless of the most sacred laws, human and divine. It is, therefore, my dear Catherine, that I deny my consent to your union with Colonel Hamilton, and advise you, as a father and a friend, to indulge in no fallacious hopes that time will change my resolution. I am too fully persuaded of your duty to fear that you will act in opposition to my wishes, but it will be small consolation to me to know you obedient, if at the same time I have reason to fear that you are unhappy—Make a vigorous effort, therefore, my dear child, worthy of yourself, to conquer your attachment to Colonel Hamilton, an attachment which can be blamed by no one, for what youthful mind ever looks for vice in an object seeming fair; and rely upon it that if you do all you can in meekness, and singleness of heart, your heavenly Father will do the rest for you, and in practicing submission you will find peace."

END OF VOL. II.

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